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A M B I T I O N.



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IN

THREE VOLUMES,

“ Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And the days o’ lang syne?”

VOL. III.

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A M B I T I O N.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE EXCURSION, CONTINUED.

THE PLAYHOUSE.

“ The actors are come hither, my lord.”

Hamlet.

WINTER, it is well known, is not the most favorable time of year for viewing a country to advantage ; yet as the weather was clear, mild, and dry, the little party experienced as much pleasure as they could reasonably expect.

After having visited those places which are deemed worthy of attention, and amongst them

the grand but dilapidated remains of Caerphilly Castle, the leaning tower of which has been so often likened, by the observant traveller, to the celebrated tower of Pisa, in Italy ; they arrived, one clear but cold evening, at a little inn situated in a pleasant village, beneath a stupendous mountain, and not far from the sea-shore. Their plain appellations and unadorned equipage had hitherto prevented those inconveniences which sometimes wait on rank, and on the following morning they walked out unattended, to view the surrounding scenery.

Having ascended the mountain, which reared its lofty head above their habitation, they obtained from a broad and level road which wound round the middle of it, a magnificent prospect of sea and land. The village stood on an extensive flat, watered by a beautiful river ; on three sides the valley was environed by high hills and an impenetrable forest, on the fourth it was bordered by the Bristol Channel, where a few vessels rode, gracefully, at anchor.

It was a lovely morning : the sun shone

brightly, though his rays afforded little heat, and the beautiful azure of the sky was ornamented by clusters of fleecy clouds ; the village slept quietly below, the mountains rose in silent but majestic grandeur above, whilst even the undulating face of ocean appeared to have imbibed the serenity of the scene.

Winny Vaughan looked as beautiful as the day, her eyes were like the brilliant blue of heaven, and the roses and lilies of her complexion, with

“ The long, flowing ringlets of gold ; ”

might not unaptly have been compared to the bright tints which floated in the sky above them ; she wore a travelling dress of dark green velvet, and a hat of the same ; the countess thought she had never seen her look so lovely, and approaching her son, who stood musing near the edge of the precipice, whilst Percival and Miss Vaughan were admiring the landscape, she asked him if he did not think Winny remarkably beautiful.

“ Yes,” he replied, “ I have seldom seen a countenance altogether so angelic.”

“ You have *never* seen one,” said the countess.

“ Pardon me, mother, I have beheld faces as lovely, though of a perfectly different cast.”

“ In England, Anthony?”

“ Yes, and on the continent also.”

“ You are now at an age,” said Lady Gwynne-Arthur, after a pause, “ when it is necessary that you should think of forming an alliance; I will not bias your choice, but if it should fall on Miss Vaughan I certainly shall make no objection.”

“ I respect Miss Vaughan highly,” said the earl, “ I acknowledge her merits, and confess that she is eminently beautiful, but I do not aspire to the honour of her hand.”

The countess was thunderstruck, or appeared to be so, “ you jest, Anthony,” said she, “ you certainly have paid her marked attention.”

“ Not more than I conceived, in common courtesy, due to her : it would be unpardonable

in me to pretend affection where I feel none."

"But Winny's family and fortune are noble," rejoined his mother.

"I confess it. To please my mother I would not hesitate at a trivial action, but I will not sacrifice my domestic happiness,—the felicity of my life,—even to nobility of blood: the hand of a princess could bring with it neither honour nor satisfaction, if my heart did not espouse her also."

The countess sighed, "you will think differently when you know a little more of the world, Anthony."

"The world is a severe school," said Gwynne-Arthur, "none fail to learn in it, whatever may be the means used for their instruction; but I hope it will never teach me to relinquish happiness at the shrine of ambition."

"Happiness and Winny are not incompatible," observed the countess, seriously.

"So far from it that I fervently hope and trust they may long be united; but were I

wedded to Winny, such a wonderful difference does the presence of an intruder make in a small party, that, happiness, my dear mother, might 'ope the window, and fly away."

The countess turned from him with a look of dissatisfaction, and, addressing something to Percival, so completely engrossed his attention, that the earl was unavoidably obliged to conduct Winny.

At that moment he had been on the point of hinting his engagement, to the countess, when her abrupt departure put it totally out of his power, and he began to reflect on the conversation which had just passed.

To communicate the subject to her at this period, he judged, would be unfavourable to the cause; he knew his mother's disposition well: after ambition, romance and surprise were her darling idols, and he who wished to triumph over the former must allow an air of romance and wonder to encircle his actions, and their effects. He, therefore, resolved to defer his meditated explanation until an opportunity presented itself of

performing it with all the requisite brilliancy of fascination calculated to please and overpower her.

These reflections passed across his mind as he walked slowly on, with Miss Vaughan's arm resting upon his, and, whilst William Percival was amusing the countess with his lively conversation, the earl had not vouchsafed a single syllable to his silent and unobtrusive companion. He was shocked and ashamed at his negligence, and after so long a silence scarcely knew what discourse to introduce.

On the following morning the ladies pleaded fatigue, and the gentlemen walked over the hill alone. William Percival had not been an inattentive observer of all that had occurred yesterday morning : he had remarked the earl and countess in conversation, he had also noticed that, immediately afterwards, the countess had contrived to engage his attention, whilst the earl escorted Miss Vaughan; he loved Winny with all the ardency and enthusiasm of his disposition, he feared that Gwynne-Arthur also

loved her, that perhaps it was a mutual affection; he resolved to be decided on the subject, for, if she could return his attachment, he should deem himself one of the happiest of human beings! but if, indeed, he had a successful rival, he would leave her, and no longer encourage a hopeless passion in his own bosom, nor interfere with the pretensions of another: accordingly this morning was the period destined for the explanation.

They walked gaily and cheerfully along the mountain-side, Gwynne-Arthur singing,

“Hark! the lark at heaven’s gate sings,
And Phoebus ’gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs,
On chaliced flowers that lies.”

“You sing well,” said Percival, “how often have I wished for such a voice as yours.”

“For what reason?” asked Gwynne-Arthur.

“Because there is something particularly attractive in sweet singing, especially to the soul of woman.”

“And you wish for a sweet voice for the pur-

pose of seducing some unsuspecting heart into your chains? Pray who's do you wish to enthrall?"

"That you shall know hereafter."

"Prythee, Percival, are you acquainted with the motive which induced my mother to commence this rustic tour?"

"I am not in the countess's secrets," answered Percival, "but I would fain be in yours, if you will admit me."

"Mine! I have no secrets. But what do you wish to know?"

"Whether or not you love Miss Vaughan. It is a bold question, and requires as unceremonious an answer; I acknowledge that I like her, but if you possess prior and accepted claims, I am willing to leave—to relinquish her. My continuing the pursuit rests entirely with you."

"If, indeed, it *did* rest with me," said Gwynne-Arthur, seriously, "I should say, go on and prosper."

"Then you resign your pretensions?"

"I never had any to resign, and though Miss

Vaughan's alliance is such as no man need reject; I have neither sought nor sighed for it. To satisfy you entirely on the subject, I will confess that my heart has long been in the possession of another.'

"Indeed?" said Percival.

"Ay indeed!" replied the earl, laughing,

"That is to say, unskill'd to cozen
It shares itself amongst a dozen."

And Miss Winny Vaughan cannot claim more than a twelfth part of it. But, seriously, for once take my advice: though I wish you all imaginable felicity with the fair Winny, I would advise you not to raise your expectations too high. Ere you breath a sentence of your passion, mark well her conduct when our friends are spoken of; I allude to no one,—she has not made me her confidant,—I may be wrong in my conjectures,—above all, even if I should be right, it is a lady's secret, therefore sacred, but observe her in conversation, note her air, voice, and countenance, when speaking or hearing of

certain absent personages; and you will be inclined with me to think, that—

‘ Love lurks unseen in the bosom of snow.’

I should never have been led to mention this suspicion, but for the hope of preventing the bitterness of that shock to which you might subject yourself by making too hasty a declaration.”

“ I thank you for your advice,” said Percival, satirically, yet good-humouredly, “ I doubt not the superiority of your experience in these affairs, and will implicitly follow the direction of so capable a guide; but during the time of probation I shall be ready to exclaim,—

‘ Love’s a tyrant I can prove.’”

“ ‘And pleasure yields as well as pain,’ ”

sang the earl, “ therefore is not deserving of as much blame as people generally cast on him.”

During their morning’s walk they had an opportunity of observing the shrewd wit which is often concealed under the uncouth, and some-

times unintellectual, aspect of the Cambrian peasantry : as they advanced along the road, the earl picked up a smart bunch of cherry-coloured ribbons.

“ What shall I do with it ? ” said he to Percival, laughing and exhibiting his prize with an air of ridicule.

“ Give it to me,” returned Percival, “ and I will give it to the first pretty cottage damsel we meet.”

In a short time a rustic youth appeared, and the latter offered the ribbons to him.

“ No, no, and thank you,” said the young man, in a tone of voice which seemed to imply that he did not wish to be importuned, “ I have not want.”

“ Take it,” exclaimed Percival “ and give it to your sweetheart, my fine fellow ; it will set her off.”

“ I do rather to keep her to myself, and thank you,” replied the peasant, hastening on, but relaxing from his moodiness sufficiently to cast round a sly glance towards the gentlemen, who

laughed and walked on. In a little while they encountered a beautiful rural maid, to whom they gave their prize, and who received it with smiles and blushes.

Unconsciously they had extended their walk to a considerable length, and as the sun had long since passed the meridian, they deemed it necessary to retrace their steps in order to reach the village ere night-fall, for the reader must remember that the year was fast drawing towards its termination.

“ I should like to know how far it is from this to the village,” said the earl, “ and whether there is a nearer path to it ; I will enquire at the the next cottage.

They turned along a narrow lane, and opened the wicket of a little garden, where the owner of the premises was standing, whom the earl addressed in his native language.

“ I do not understand Welch,” said the man, “ can’t you speak any thing else.”

“ I was not aware that *you* could speak any

thing else," replied Gwynne-Arthur. "How far is it from here to the village?"

"I do not know; I will ask my wife if you will walk in, perhaps I shall be able to inform you."

They followed the man into the cottage, and the earl whispered to Percival, "it is rather strange to find English people—low English people—in so obscure a part of Wales as this is."

A man, wrapped in a travelling cloak, was seated before the fire; he arose on the entrance of the gentlemen, gazed at them for a moment, and then left the cottage.

"Loveliest!" croaked their conductor at the bottom of a step-ladder, which seemed to be the only mode of communication between the upper apartment and the lower, "Loveliest! come and direct these gentlemen to the village, love!"

"I am coming, dearest!" was the reply, and in the next moment a woman, uglier even than her husband, (who was himself a perfect pattern of ugliness) appeared. Percival turned from these people with disgust, the earl observed his

action and smiled at him : the woman however gave them the desired information, and they proceeded on their way.

“Heavens!” exclaimed Percival as they left the cottage, “never will I use the terms “love!” and “loveliest” to the woman of my heart, if they can be so far degraded as to be applied to such beings as those whom we have just quitted.”

“Why the poor woman has done you no harm, Percival.”

“Yes, she has; she has discomposed my mind, she has annihilated every idea of woman’s grace and loveliness. Is it possible that so wide a difference can exist between persons of the same sex and hemisphere? If she were shewn to me as one of those beings who are formed to inspire love, to be man’s comfort and companion through life,—I should be almost ready to exclaim

‘ Oh ! bear me to some distant shore,

Or solitary cell;

Where none but savage monsters roar,

Where *love ne’er* deigned to dwell !”

The earl laughed heartily, and asked Percival if he did not imagine love to be blind.

"I never thought so until now," was the reply, "but, from this instance I can willingly believe that he is occasionally blind, deaf, and out of his senses."

"Love is but a temporary madness."

"Then you, Gwynne-Arthur, are, as well as myself, a--lunatic!"

It was now waning towards dusk, the hum of adjacent rivulets buzzed through the grey twilight,

"And fairy forests fringed the evening sky."

As they entered the village, a man enveloped in a long cloak passed hastily near them, and gazed intensely upon the countenance of each; Gwynne-Arthur was surprised by this investigation, and turning to look after the stranger, who proceeded along the path they had just quitted, recognised the figure of him whom they had encountered at the Englishman's cottage.

The first thing which particularly attracted the notice of the gentlemen, on the following morning, was a play-bill stuck on the door of the inn-yard, intimating that a company of theatricals, who had just arrived, would, on that evening, have the honour of appearing before the public, in the tragedy of Hamlet; when Mr. Rattletrap, from the "Theatre Royal, Bath," had, "kindly consented," to perform the character of the Danish Prince. By way of recommending the piece, Johnson's criticisms were attached to the announcement, as though they deemed that, in such an unrefined district as this, even *Shakspeare* needed a recommendation.

Gwynne-Arthur turned towards Percival, and smiled. "Shall we visit this temple of genius, Percival?" he asked.

"Oh certainly, I shall feel much pleasure in viewing the performance of this Mr. Rattletrap, who is, I suppose, some candle-snuffer from the Bath Theatre, come down to astonish the simple

inhabitants of this retired spot by the brilliancy of his genius."

"Ay," said the earl, "or some cast-off scene shifter, who wishes to set the country on fire, technically *starring it*."

"Let him beware, lest he burn himself out in the blaze," exclaimed his witty friend, "but we are unmercifully and unwarrantably judging before trial, which is contrary to the laws of our country: we will hear him first, and condemn him afterwards, if we must condemn."

On enquiring, they found that the stage was erected in a spare room of the parish workhouse, and immediately carried their intelligence to the countess and Miss Vaughan, begging for their society in the expedition.

"You are two inconsiderate mortals," exclaimed the countess, "how know you that the place is clean, safe, and convenient?"

"We will not undertake to answer for that," said Percival, "but, with your ladyship's permission, we will peep in to view the theatre to-night, and, to-morrow evening, I hope it will

be honoured with the presence of the countess and Miss Vaughan."

At the appointed hour the gentlemen repaired to the theatre, and, after surmounting, with exemplary patience and fortitude, the numerous obstructions which presented themselves, in the forms of broken pavements, rubbish, and dingles, arrived at the scene of action.

A solitary lamp threw its radiance over the narrow passage which led to the door of the play-house, where the *Ghost*,—ready dressed for the stage,—waited to receive the tickets and money. The gentlemen paid for their admission, and the ghost, with a theatrical flourish, drew back a curtain of green baize, under which he nodded to his noble guests to proceed, and in a moment they were enveloped in darkness.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" exclaimed Percival, "whither, in the name of heaven, has his ghost-ship consigned us? Gwynne-Arthur, 'my co-mate, and brother in exile,' how fares it with your lordship?"

“ Perfectly well, my friend ; I shall wait here until the brilliance of the Danish court shall beam to guide our steps into a path of safety.”

“ Then you may wait for ever,” cried Percival, “ for believe me, my lord, no brilliance will beam to-night.”

A little, tiny candle was, at this moment, thrust, by an invisible hand, upon a corner of the stage, which at the best but served to make “ darkness visible,” and the earl attempted, by the help of its flickering rays, to secure a convenient seat. He ascended a few steps, and entered what was denominated *Boxes*, but which had more the appearance of *shambles*, and William Percival, by an incautious movement, was precipitated, at the same instant, into the pit.

“ Hang it !” he exclaimed, annoyed beyond endurance at the treatment which they experienced from what he termed, ‘ this ghost of a money-taker,’ “ I am in the wrong box.”

“ Are you ?” said the earl calmly, and suppressing a laugh, as the flooring burst from be-

neath his foot, and almost prostrated him at the side of his companion. "Are you, Percival? I am out of mine, right or wrong."

William could not avoid laughing, whilst he called out in a theatrical tone, "A light! a light! my kingdom for a light!"

These words, probably, reached the ear of the ghost, for, in the next moment, his head appeared within the green baize curtain, and he proceeded, with a quivering rushlight, to illumine those candles which were already placed in their sockets for that purpose.

"Why did you not light your theatre before this time?" enquired Percival, "people may break their necks here, through your negligence."

"Lord bless you, Sir, if I was to light 'em before, the candles would not last the night through," was the reply; and the ghost again walked off to usher more guests into the regions of darkness.

"That man," said Percival, "thinks himself

as great a personage as the first actor on the London boards."

"And why not?" answered the earl. "We certainly cannot deny that he plays a *grave* character."

The orchestra consisted of one fiddle—not much out of tune,—and the musician was seated on a corner of the stage, to allow more room for the audience in the pit, where the earl and Percival preserved their stations, deeming it a safer place than the 'boxes,' whence his lordship had so unexpectedly descended.

The house filled, and in a short time the performance commenced. The moment of greatest fascination in a theatre, appears, to me, to be when the curtain rises, when the stage lamps burst into observation and brilliance at once, and the full tones of the musical instruments swell upon the eager and enchanted ear, in one rich strain of inspiring melody. Let the reader, therefore, imagine the effect produced in this little playhouse by the electrifying elevation of

the formidable curtain; let him conceive the intoxicating eclat of the scene, and the rapture with which it filled an anxious and admiring audience; the exquisite harmony of a squeaking violin,—the overpowering radiance of a few, thin, tallow candles, and the magnificent appearance of the poverty-stricken actors, shining in feathers, gilt, and spangles.

In proper time the prince of Denmark made his appearance, and, to judge from the “bravoes!” and thunders of applause which crowned his performance, exerted his talents to the satisfaction of the audience.

As the curtain rose after the tragedy, to exhibit a ballet, performed by the *corps dramatique*, in which Mr Rattletrap took the active part of Harlequin, and all eyes and ears were directed towards the stage, a paper was thrust into the hands of the earl, and a low voice whispered, “My lord, you have dropt your play-bill.”

Astonished at hearing his title pronounced by a stranger, Lord Gwynne-Arthur looked round to discover the person who had addressed him,

but only the countenances of the attentive gazers met his investigating glance. On opening the playbill a paper appeared within, he examined it curiously—anxiously, and descried the following words.

“ Let not the Earl of Castle Gwynne imagine that his plain travelling appellation of Mr. Gwynne can shield him from recognition. If he will walk towards the bridge, at twelve to-night, and summon sufficient patience to endure temporary anguish, he will hear something which will purchase for him both honour and happiness.

A Friend.”

Nothing could surpass the astonishment of the earl at the receipt of this epistle, but he had not leisure to reflect on it, ere the same voice whispered,—

“ Decide immediately: yes or no.”

Again the earl looked round, and so suddenly that it was almost impossible for the speaker to

escape detection; those who were sitting close behind him appeared even more engrossed by the performance than the other part of the audience, and he again turned away disappointed.

“ You will not discover me,” was pronounced, “ but your own fate depends on it : will you come or not ? ”

Leaning back against the bench behind him, and without looking round, the earl said in a low tone “ He of whom you speak has no occasion to seek privately for honour : he has never sacrificed either that or his integrity, and happiness follows of course.”

“ The most virtuous are not always the most happy,” rejoined his mysterious friend, “ but I leave this to the decision of your own judgment. Farewell ! ”

Gwyne-Arthur looked round, and saw the tall, dark figure of a man retreating behind the green-baize curtain. The earl asked Percival if he was not almost tired of the performance, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, they left the house together.

A man passed them in the dusky passage, and said, as though directing his conversation to some one who had preceded him, "Remember: the bridge at twelve o'clock."

The earl recognized the voice, and perfectly understood the meaning of the words; but Percival, from the manner in which they were spoken, paid no attention to either. During their walk home, Gwynne-Arthur was lost in conjecture as to the purport of this mysterious invitation.

"It bodes no good," thought he, "if he has anything to communicate which affects me, let him come forward and declare it openly in the face of day: I will not obey this midnight summons."

Curiosity strongly impelled the earl to the contrary of this resolution, whilst a sense of his own dignity alone, urged him to abide by it, and in this undecided state of mind, he arrived at the little inn, where the countess and Miss Vaughan awaited their return.

The first enquiries which the ladies made were how they had been entertained.

“ Oh, exceedingly well,” replied Percival, “ brilliant actors, and a crowded house.”

“ How did you like Mr. Rattletrap, in Hamlet?” asked the countess.

“ I wish your ladyship had witnessed his performance,” exclaimed William, “ he is a star of the first magnitude: Macready and Kean are nothing to him,—such grace,—such conception!—The gods showered upon him their whole artillery of applause and orange-peel, and, to speak the truth, *worthy was he of what he won.*”

“ Is the theatre got up in any kind of tolerable style?” enquired Miss Vaughan.

“ Yes,” replied the earl, “ there is a stage, an orchestra, a good company, with boxes, pit, and gallery.”

“ And a money-taker,” quickly added Percival, “ alias candle-snuffer,—alias *ghost*. I, being naturally of an humble disposition, took my unassuming station in the pit, whilst my

noble friend *cut a dash through the boxes*, but as he who exalteth himself shall be humbled, it was not long ere he was punished for his presumption."

The earl burst into a laugh at the recollection of his descent from the boxes, and in a humorous manner began to narrate the substance of their adventures.

On retiring to his apartment Gwynne-Arthur looked at his watch, it was just a quarter to twelve. "To be or not to be—that is the question?" he exclaimed in the words of Shakespeare. "I do not like this mysterious affair—I will not go—and yet he said my honour and happiness were concerned, but can I believe him? can I place faith in the words of a man I have not even *seen*? He may be a robber, an assassin, for aught I know; I do not fear him, I would not shrink from any single foe, and should not be appalled by two, yet there is no necessity for risking danger. Lastly, and firmly, I will *not* go! Lie there, thou perplexing little billet,

and do not meet my eye again, lest thou shouldst have power to alter a prudent resolution."

As he deposited the note in a drawer, he felt strongly impelled to obey its summons. "This is the very moment," thought he "now or never, I *will* go, let the consequence be what it may! I cannot endure this uncertainty!"

He started up, loaded a pair of small pistols, threw his travelling cloak around him, exchanged his hat for a fur cap, and softly opening the door of his chamber, listened until perfectly satisfied that every one had retired; then crept silently along the passage. As he passed the door of Percival's apartment, he perceived light streaming through the crevices, and justly concluding that he had not yet sought his pillow, trod still more gently. Through the carelessness of some thoughtless individual, a small round stick lay upon the floor, the earl, who had neither lamp nor lanthorn, placed his foot on it and slipped, whilst the stick rolled with velocity and noise against Percival's door, who instantly appeared in his dressing gown, with a candle

in his hand. He had almost seized the earl by the collar, ere he recognised him.

“In the name of heaven,” he exclaimed. “whither are you going, my lord, at this late hour?”

Chagrined, vexed, and disappointed, at being retarded in his expedition, Gwynne-Arthur replied in confusion “I believe I left my eyeglass below, I am going to seek it.”

“It hangs at your neck,” said William, whilst his eye glanced over the accoutrements of the earl, and the pistols which peeped from beneath his cloak. Gwynne-Arthur felt like one accused of crime, reserve he knew would only draw suspicion and contempt upon himself, therefore stepping into the apartment of his friend, he closed the door and flung his cloak aside, saying, “Percival, I have a secret to impart, and will rely upon your friendship and discretion.” He then gave him the mysterious epistle, and William perused it.

“What do you advise?” asked the earl, when he had concluded,

“ Have you any knowledge of the writer, or any suspicion of its import ?”

“ None. I know of no communication that can either benefit or injure me.”

“ Then I certainly would not attend to it.”

“ I had once resolved not to do so, but an irresistible impulse seems to urge me forward, and I scarcely know how to act.”

“ That impulse is but excitement,” said Percival. “ The writer very probably is some one who is acquainted with your disposition, and wishes to turn the ardour of your temper to his own advantage.”

“ I cannot tell, it may be so, but I feel that I must go, farewell !”

“ If you go, then, I will accompany you.”

“ Why should I lead you into danger ?”

“ If, indeed, there is danger ? that is a stronger reason, why you should not go alone.”

“ Then, do you seriously advise me to decline it ?”

“ Were I in your situation, I certainly should not think of such a thing.”

“ I will abide by your decision, my own mind is in so much confusion, that I am not capable of deciding accurately upon any subject. Good night, Percival.”

“ Good night,” replied his friend, but at the same time accompanying the earl to his apartment, fearful lest his wavering resolution should at length anchor on a dangerous point. By a conversation on general subjects, Percival continued to prolong his presence in the chamber of Gwynne-Arthur, nor left him until the latter pressed his pillow, and then retired with the pleasing reflection of having shielded his friend from impending danger.

The slumber of the earl was interrupted by harrassing reflections on the strange being who had so mysteriously summoned him; but the thought of speedily beholding Angela, chased these gloomy visions from his mind, and he sunk into a peaceful sleep with the image of Angelina hovering around his pillow.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SNOW-STORM—THE COTTAGE.

—————Take this sigh,
Its struggling ardour will indeed impart
A tribute of mournful misery ;
And, while breaks the last string of this poor heart,
Think, Julia, that its wretched sufferings were
Endured for thee !——

Grenville Fletcher, Esq.

It was now drawing near to Christmas, and the countess proposed immediately directing their route towards Castle Gwynne ; the proposition was acceded to by all, and on the second morning after their adventures at the theatre, they departed for the place of their destination.

It was a cold and cloudy morning, the wind whistled shrilly over the heath, and the view which they obtained from the carriage windows was confined and comfortless. As they were anxious to arrive at F— that night, an additional pair of horses was added; and shortly afterwards, the snow descended in huge flakes, and with so much rapidity, that, ere they were within twenty miles of F—, the narrow roads through which they had to pass had become nearly impassable.

It was vain for the horses to attempt redoubling their speed: they could scarcely move the vehicle to which they were harnessed. Night closed in unusually early, and the party at length found themselves involved in darkness, near the brow of a high and frightful mountain, ten miles from the town they had quitted; and sixteen from F—, to which they were destined; whilst the only light afforded them was that reflected from the lamps upon the new fallen snow beneath.

“ How annoying!—how vexing!—how dan-

gerous this is!" exclaimed the countess. The servant who sat beside the driver alighted, and approached the carriage door.

"I know not what to do, my lord," he said, "it is impossible for us to proceed; the snow seems to get deeper at every step."

"Is it possible to return, Robert, to the town we have quitted?" asked the earl.

"No, my lord, this road is too narrow for the carriage to turn in, and, if it was not, the wheel-tracks must be filled up by this time; so please your lordship, we should be as badly off, as we are now."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the countess, "the horses will perish,—the servants will perish,—we shall all perish.—Oh Winny! Winny! can you ever forgive me for having brought you from a comfortable home, to be frozen to death, on a cold December night, in a snow-storm?"

"Is there no habitation near, in which we can obtain shelter for the night?" asked the earl.

"I think I saw a light, a few minutes ago, my lord, about a quarter of a mile off, if your

lordship pleases, I will go and see where it comes from."

Robert hastened away, and the countess, in anxious suspense, awaited his return; in the course of half an hour, during which the snow continued to descend, they perceived a light at a short distance, and soon afterwards, Robert, accompanied by a peasant who carried a lanthorn in his hand, approached the carriage.

"This good man, Sir," said the attendant, carefully suppressing his master's title, "has offered to accommodate your honour, and the ladies and the other gentleman, if your honour can put up with the rough entertainment of his cottage."

"We are much indebted to him," returned the earl, "and will not hesitate to accept his kind offer. May I enquire your name, my good friend?"

"My name it is William Walter Morgan, and you be kindly welcome, sir."

"How far is it to your abode, my friend?"

“ *Liddle* more nor a quarter on a mile ; I will shew it the way, and you please.”

The party prepared to alight: the earl took his mother in his arms, notwithstanding her apprehensions of fatiguing and endangering him, and Percival approached to perform the same office for Winny.

“ No,” she exclaimed, retreating from him, “ I should be shocked to trespass so far on your good-nature ; allow me to walk, I shall be more satisfied.”

“ It is impossible,” said William, “ you could not walk a yard,—you would die with cold.”

“ Unless you allow me to walk,” exclaimed Winny, peremptorily, “ I will not descend from the carriage.”

“ I should be inhuman to do so.”

“ Not if it is my wish,” said Winny, and opening the door next to her, she drew her mantle firmly round, and sprung into the deep snow ; William Percival perceiving her action, flew round to join her.

“ Oh ! dear,” exclaimed Morgan, addressing

the earl, " I hope it is'nt great many you be : you be kindly welcome under the thatch, sure, but I be 'fraid I haven't got 'nough o' *peds* to 'comdit you."

" The shelter of your roof is all we require, honest friend ; oblige me by going before us with your lanthorn, and we will follow you."

The man obeyed him. The earl proceeded ; and Winny caught Percival's arm to sustain her almost sinking weight, for her garments, having become clogged with the snow, seemed ready to bear her at every step to the ground.

In a few moments Percival felt her grasp slacken, he spoke, but she answered not, and, in the next instant, fell, almost beneath his feet : the cold had pierced her delicate frame, and numbed her corporal faculties ; she had fainted.

Percival caught her in his arms, and wild with apprehension, with preternatural strength dashed through the deep mounds of snow which covered the earth ; he followed the light which glimmered before him, and trod in the print of recent footsteps ; he, who had before lagged in

his course, seemed now to possess the wings of an eagle; he saw the guide enter a house, he beheld Gwynne-Arthur follow him, the door closes—it is quickly re-opened, the earl stepped forth to cast round an anxious glance for his friends,—Percival flew by him and laid the insensible maiden, wrapped in her snow-covered garb, upon the clay floor, within a moderate distance of a large and brilliant fire.

The terrors of the countess, and the energies of all, were now called into action. Winny was removed into an inner apartment, where the countess and the farmer's wife attended her with sedulous care. In a short time she revived, and, with Lady Gwynne-Arthur, joined the gentlemen who were seated near the kitchen-fire.

During the absence of the ladies, the earl and Percival perceived, with surprise, that, besides their own party, another guest was in the cottage; a poor traveller who had been benighted, and almost lost his life in the snow,

and had arrived at William Morgan's abode about half an hour previous. He was seated on a large, old-fashioned settle, near the fire, his hat was drawn over his eyes, he moved not, when the gentlemen approached, nor looked up, but on seeing the countess and Winny advance, he arose from his seat, and retired into a remote corner.

Vexed at the idea of depriving another of those comforts for which she was herself indebted to the humanity of strangers, the countess, in a conciliating tone, begged him to resume the station he had quitted; the stranger thanked her in a gentle accent, advanced to where the fire threw its brightest reflection, and, taking off his hat, bowed gracefully to her ladyship, then passed on to the seat he had formerly occupied. He did not resume his hat, but he sunk back into that part of the settle where the light, being interrupted by the wall, left his countenance completely enveloped in shade. The servants now entered with the pleasing intelligence that they had, with the assistance of Mor-

gan and his two men-servants, succeeded in removing the carriage and horses into an out-house belonging to their host, where they were to remain for the night; and that the good-natured farmer had also provided a lodging for themselves in the loft above.

A comfortable but humble supper was spread before the guests, which no solicitations could induce the stranger to partake; he was immovable, he would not quit his seat. Wine was brought in from the carriage, the earl poured some into a horn cup, for they had no better vessels, and handed it to the stranger, who received it with a trembling hand, saying, as he did so, "Honour and happiness to you."

The earl almost started at these words: there was nothing uncommon in them, they were such as any man might pronounce on a similar occasion, yet they were the very terms which had been used by his mysterious correspondent: his countenance appeared for one moment overshadowed by thought, but in the next he turned

to bear a part in the lively conversation which was passing around him.

When the viands were removed they found that only one bed could be obtained, which the countess and Miss Vaughan agreed to occupy jointly, as the gentlemen assured them that they should pass the night very comfortably near the cottage fire.

When the ladies had retired, and the farmer and his wife had also departed, the gentlemen began to select their stations for the night: the stranger drew a small bundle, tied up in a silk handkerchief, from beneath the settle, and placing it on the floor at some distance from the fire, wrapped his cloak around him, and lay down, appropriating the parcel for his pillow. Percival stretched himself upon the settle, and the earl took possession of a high-backed, straw, elbow-chair.

Thus arranged, the travellers endeavoured to seek repose. William Percival soon betrayed, by his free though gentle breathings, that Somnus had deigned to smooth the hardness of his pillow,

the stranger lay perfectly still, not even a breath nor a sigh was to be heard, and the earl, lost in a train of pensive reflections, soon found that sleep had fled far from his eye-lids.

The night lagged slowly on, whilst the fire burned bright and clear before them; a hot cinder burst from the grate and buried itself amid the folds of the stranger's mantle; the earl sprung towards him, and, shaking his cloak, hastily brushed it away; the stranger was roused by this action, and, raising his head from the earth, enquired the cause.

"A burning coal," said the earl, "popped from the fire amongst your garments, probably it was my action of throwing it off which wakened you."

"I thank your lordship, but a good deed is its own reward: in saving my life you have preserved your own honour."

"Ah," exclaimed Gwynne-Arthur, "who are you, that seem so well acquainted with me?"

The stranger answered not.

“Speak !” said the earl, leaning down towards him. “Speak ! You have raised my curiosity to the uttermost : not to gratify it now would be cruel.”

The stranger raised himself upon his elbow, and looked round towards Percival, who, he perceived, was still locked in the adamantine chains of slumber ; and by this action, as the cloak fell from about his shoulders, the earl had an opportunity of examining his countenance. He appeared to be about the middle age, his face had been handsome, for though it was now pale, emaciated, and care-worn, it still bore the marks of manly beauty.

“Who, or what I am, matters not, my lord : it is sufficient that I am your friend. The time may come for a fuller explanation, but at present it is vain to question me.” He again lay down, and appeared to betake himself to repose.

The voice of the stranger thrilled through the soul of Gwynne-Arthur : it was the same which had so mysteriously addressed him in the theatre ;

again bending towards him, he said, in a low tone, "you know me?"

"Lord Gwynne-Arthur, I do," was the reply.

"Do you know this hand-writing?" asked the earl, producing the little billet which he had so unaccountably received. The stranger took it, and glancing over its contents, threw it into the flames.

"Why have you destroyed it?" exclaimed Gwynne-Arthur, in surprise.

"To prevent you betraying me, and ruining yourself."

"Is my fate, then, so closely connected with yours?"

"It is much more so than you imagine."

"Good heaven: who are you? I entreat—I demand an explanation!"

"Both are alike useless: the time is not come for it; but I am your friend."

"And may I enquire what has made you so?"

"Not any personal esteem, my lord Gwynne-Arthur, not any individual regard, not respect for your wealth, blood, or titles, though you may

be deserving of such:—but a reason more powerful than all these combined—my own wrongs.”

“And can I redress them?”

“No, but you can revenge them.”

“Revenge is a bad principle.”

The stranger laughed wildly, “Will you acknowledge that six months hence?” he exclaimed, “will you acknowledge it when we meet again? will you acknowledge it when you feel as I do?—when you endure the racking, torturing pangs, which I now endure? Oh! no, you will then deem revenge but justice!”

“You seem to warn me of impending evil,” said the earl, “are you conscious of any?”

The stranger spoke not, he had sunk again upon his pillow! Gwynne-Arthur repeated his question, “Prythee, let me sleep,” he said, “I am wearied, and have many miles to walk tomorrow.”

In spite of his anxiety and impatience, the earl ceased to question him: his appearance betrayed extreme poverty, and, though his air, manner,

and countenance, bespoke grandeur, his habiliments were scant and wretched; he had also mentioned *walking* on the morrow, which implied he could not afford to hire a vehicle: Gwynne-Arthur was half inclined to imagine that his mysterious friend was deranged in his mind, and again bending gently towards him, he said "One word ere you sink to repose, be not offended by my offer, for here are none to witness it; but—do you need pecuniary assistance?"

It was some time ere the stranger replied, at length he sighed out an affirmative. The earl drew forth his purse, which contained no inconsiderable sum, and placed it in the stranger's hand.

He caught the earl's cloak as he was moving away. "From *your* hands?" he exclaimed, "*this* from *your* hands? Oh it is impossible, I do not require half of it!"

"Keep it," said Gwynne-Arthur, "it may be long ere we meet again, and the world is not over kind to the unfortunate. I have sufficient

money for my purposes, and remember, if you should ever require more, my purse is at your service."

"I thank you," replied the stranger, "when we meet again I will pay you."

"I do not accede to those conditions, I will not take back the small sum with which I have been able to furnish you."

"When we meet again, I say," continued the stranger, "I will pay you—but not with money. Now, my lord, I entreat you to leave me to repose, and may your slumbers be as gentle and refreshing as your heart is unsuspicious and liberal."

He closed his eyes, and appeared by his short breathing, to have already sunk into the arms of sleep. After contemplating his countenance for a few moments, the earl leant back in his chair, and then reviewed it in the orb of his intellect. He had somewhere seen such eyes before, the features also were familiar to him; but *where* had he encountered them? the large dark orbs, when turned full upon him; filled

his memory with a vague sense of recognition, yet he could not call to mind how, when, or where, he had beheld them. He turned with pensive pleasure towards the heartfelt expressions of gratitude which the stranger had uttered, and felt the serene happiness of that noble soul, which can—

“ In one good deed a fleeting hour employ,
Or flush one faded cheek with honest joy ;”

He resolved to recommence his conversation with the stranger in the morning, and, since his curiosity had been so far excited, to watch the route which he should take on departing from the cottage.

Peaceful and pleasing reflection is nearly allied to sleep, and it was not long ere the earl followed the example of those around him, and sunk into slumber.

He was roused in the morning by the preparations which were making for breakfast, and on

opening his eyes beheld the farmer's wife arranging the breakfast table, he looked around the habitation, and found that no other visitor than himself was visible. On enquiring for his friend and the stranger, he was informed that Percival had gone out to view the weather, and that the stranger had departed at break of day.

“ He has anticipated me ! ” thought Gwynne-Arthur, “ he has anticipated and avoided me ! ” A feeling of disappointment and anxiety shot across his heart, and he hastily turned from tormenting and useless conjecture, to the contemplation of his approaching meeting with Angela.

After a moment spent in this delightful vision, he started up with the intention of joining his friend without the cottage. As he moved, he struck something with his foot, which rolled before him ; it was carefully wrapt in paper, the earl raised it from the floor, and opening the envelope, perceived a curious and beautiful ring. Astonished at finding this valuable jewel beneath the roof of a humble farm-house, he turned to

reconnoître the place where he had found it, and discovered it to be the very spot whereon the stranger's bundle had rested the preceding night, when it had served him for a pillow. Hoping that even this would afford some elucidation to the mystery which enveloped him, Gwynne-Arthur advanced towards the door, and examined well the shining ornament. It was large, evidently intended for the finger of a man, and composed of fine gold; on one side it bore a sapphire heart, with the letters J. M. in pearls, below the point; on the opposite side of the ring was a small heart of ruby, with the letters A. M. in pearls; between the point of the ruby heart and the back of the sapphire, lay a tiny tress of soft black hair; whilst between the point of the sapphire and the back of the ruby, lay another small cord of hair, a shade lighter; thus encircling the ring with what appeared to be mutual pledges of affection. Withinside, for Gwynne-Arthur overlooked nothing belonging to this fanciful treasure, was inscribed an Italian motto, the meaning of which was, though

expressed in much shorter terms, "As the ring encircleth thy finger, so shall the spirit of love guard thy person from all evil. Julia."

"Poor Julia!" thought the earl, "how much distressed thy friend will be on discovering that he has lost thy precious gift, perhaps the only valuable he possessed! Well! I may meet thee, ere long, unfortunate stranger, and till that period thy Julia's ring shall be faithfully preserved for thee!"

He again wrapped it in its former covering, and deposited it within his pocket book.

Perceiving Percival at a short distance, the earl hastened to join him. The weather had changed during the night, it had become warmer, heavy rain had succeeded the snow storm, and almost deluged the low countries; whilst the clearness of an unclouded sky was reflected in the small lakes, which the recent showers had formed on the face of the earth.

On returning to the cottage, the gentlemen found that the countess and Winny had just

risen, and were waiting their presence at the breakfast table.

A plentiful board was spread, and articles of the finest quality set before them : cream, ham, fowls, and other dainties ; for the table of a Welchman, even of the poorest, is always as luxurious as his means will afford ; whilst the good dame of the house employed herself in making rich cakes, on the bakestone, for their breakfast, and served them up to her guests as they became ready. At the same time a comfortable repast was laid in an inferior kitchen, for the attendants of the party.

Soon as every one was refreshed, the carriage was brought out, and the guests prepared to depart. Having shaken hands with their host and hostess, and kissed two fine, rosy children, condescensions which much gratified the feelings of those to whom they were paid, our travellers entered the vehicle, but not before the countess had found an opportunity of rewarding their kindness in the most munificent and grateful manner.

The pensiveness which hung about the earl during their journey, occasioned by his late conversation with the stranger, was attributed, by his companions, to the effect of fatigue, therefore did not draw forth any unpleasant remarks.

On arriving at F—— they merely exchanged horses, and proceeded immediately to Gwynne-Arthur. Again the earl felt a degree of agitation as they approached the castle; in a few moments he should behold Angelina,—perhaps also Mabel; was the latter still in the village? He kept down a struggling sigh, which fain would have heaved to the memory of her wrongs, and felt that to be again placed beside the neglected, the unassuming, the amiable Glendower, would endanger his constancy even to the brilliant, the angelic De Lairai herself!

Soon as the carriage-wheels sounded in the village, the loud bark of Sable was heard, and in a short time the animal appeared, wagging his tail, and frisking before the vehicle to the castle gates.

Gwynne-Arthur's heart beat high with anxiety

and emotion, as he descended from the carriage. He thought it an age ere the steps were let down, and grudged the time spent in the ceremonies of alighting. When at liberty, he rushed into the castle; almost the first person he encountered in the hall was Mr. Jenkins.

“ Ah, my friend ! ” he exclaimed, hastily, “ how are you, and how are all other inmates of the castle ? ”

“ Perfectly well my lord,” he replied, “ you had better retire to your apartment.”

The earl flew thither. Near to the window, in a pensive and thoughtful attitude, stood Angelina,—weeping. Was she weeping for *him*, was she mourning over his absence? He sprung forward and clasped her to his bosom.

“ Angelina ! ” he exclaimed, “ Why are these tears flowing? not for *me*, surely ? ”

“ For whom else should they flow, Anthony? who else can extract them? I was weeping tears of sorrow at your prolonged absence; they are now become tears of joy ! ”

Gwynne-Arthur enquired of his bride, if

every thing had gone on well, since his departure.

“ Yes,” she replied, “ but I understand that your Christmas guests will arrive to morrow, and,—except that I almost fear to leave my husband in such an assemblage of elegance and beauty,—I could wish to retire, for a short period at least, to the humble home he has provided for me.”

“ Angelina, you are an angel for consenting to an arrangement, which must inevitably occasion you much inconvenience.”

“ Do not mention that; it is for our mutual safety; and now hasten to your toilette, or the countess, and her guests, will be surprised at your disappearance.”

Gwynne-Arthur obeyed her, and, in a short time, repaired to the drawing-room, where Mr. Jenkins was paying his compliments to the party just arrived.

Winny Vaughan opened the piano-forte, and seated herself at the instrument.

“ It is like speaking to an old friend, after a

long separation," said she, addressing Percival, who stood beside her, as she touched the delicious strains of a beautiful Irish melody, "it is like speaking to an old friend, to hear again the sound of an instrument which has long been silent."

"You are fond of music," he remarked, "for what reason do you most value it,—for its intrinsic sweetness, or for its associations?"

"I like music for itself," said Winny, "but I value it chiefly as it is connected with by-gone scenes; the most brilliant piece of music would not have power to enchant me half so much, on a first hearing, as the end of an old song, which had formerly been sung by a friend, would please and fascinate; the latter would bring with it so many beautiful recollections, it would serve as a picture, and place the remembered object in the very position which he or she had been accustomed to occupy, arrange all surrounding things in their former situations, and convey the tone of voice, the look, the very glance of the

eye! Oh, there is more in this than in all the stately music in the world!"

"You are enthusiastic," said Percival, "and I doubt not that you often indulge in these pleasing visions?"

"No," replied Winny, blushing, "I have no opportunity of doing so; my father never sings, he is not particularly fond of music, and I have no other person to remember."

"Do you admire Sir Richard Gordon's singing?" asked Percival, and waited almost breathless for the answer.

"Oh, exceedingly!" exclaimed the artless Winny, "I never heard a more pleasing voice; how sweetly he sings that Spanish song, and all the beautiful ballads of his country, and of Ireland. Do you remember Moore's melody,—

"Believe me, if all those endearing young charms," which he sings so well?"

Winny began to play the song she had mentioned, and as Percival fancied that she did so with a still and pensive pleasure, he turned ab-

ruptly away, to conceal the emotion which, otherwise, might have been too visible in his countenance.

The following day was that dedicated to St. Thomas, and liberal portions of provision were distributed to the poor, at the castle-gates.

Lord Gwynne-Arthur walked into the cwm, intending to visit his old friend, Morgan Hughes. He found him surrounded by his cheerful and happy family; Gwynne-Arthur bent down to kiss the little Mabel, but, putting some money into the child's hand, he turned away, without bestowing on her his intended salute, for he would not so far indulge himself, as to kiss even the namesake and god-child of her, who might, in some degree, be considered the rival of Angelina.

Having enquired respecting the room which he had formerly engaged, and finding that it was still at his service, he hastened to depart as soon as was consistent with his host's ideas of hospitality.

Several visitors had arrived at the castle in the course of the day, amongst them, Lady Frances Gwyer, and Mrs. Forrester. Every one, except the earl, lamented the absence of Sir Richard Gordon, but his lordship felt relief and pleasure at the circumstance. In the evening, after all others had retired to repose, Lord Gwynne-Arthur walked upon the terrace before the windows of his sleeping-room; whilst Angelina made preparations for her departure to the habitation of Morgan Hughes. It was a fine, clear night, and not cold for the time of year, though the frost lay thick and hard upon the ground; the pale moon shone smoothly upon the silent landscape, and the face of heaven was crowded with innumerable stars, which incessantly twinkled in the gentle bosom of the lake. It was a night calculated to produce reflection—such reflection as tends to make man happy with his situation, be it what it may,—when even the most distressed spirit, bending beneath “the whips and scorns o’ the time,” might exclaim—as he views the serene aspect of a lovely country,

which the God of nature has so liberally bestowed on us all—

“I care not, fortune! what you me deny :

You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace!”

Gwynne-Arthur felt all the beauty of this soothing scene: he stood upon a corner of the terrace which commanded a fine view of the adjacent country, he looked over the sleeping landscape, and then upon the face of a cloudless firmament.

“His arms were crossed upon his breast, his eye

Fixed on th' irradiated canopy

Of Heaven above him, where a thousand springs

Of light, like sparkling gems on angels' wings,

Spangled the azure vault; whilst here, and there,

A thin and silvery vapour crossed the fair

And cold face of the moon.—Ah! such a night

Is seldom given to bless a mortal's sight!

Yet he who viewed it, prized it not the less,

But, *feeling*, he *confessed*, its loveliness.”

From a contemplation of the grand and beautiful in nature, Gwynne-Arthur, turned to the more melancholy, though not less interesting, recollection of the unhappy stranger. “That man

has seen better days," thought he, "the pride of a lofty soul seems still to contend upon his brow, with the humiliation of misfortune!" He drew forth his curious ring, and again read the motto. "This benediction seems to contain a magic power," he exclaimed, "I will wear it, hoping, that the gentle Julia's blessing will follow me as well as her lover." He placed the ring upon his finger, and found that it fitted him. "Sweet Julia! interesting stranger!" sighed the earl, "when I meet with either of you, this ring shall be restored; but, until then, I claim the privilege of wearing it, as a sacred talisman to guard a faithful lover's steps from danger."

The sound of Angelina's lute at this moment attracted his attention, and he hastened towards his dressing-room, whence it proceeded. Angela met him at the door.

"What a fine night," she exclaimed, as she stepped forth upon the terrace, "and though it is cold to an Italian constitution, I was not aware, Gwynne-Arthur, that your country could boast such nights as this."

“Then you did my country an injustice,” replied the earl, “for, ‘a fairer isle than Britain, never sun viewed in his wide career,’ look upon that moon, Angela, remember the delicious evenings which we spent together, in your beautiful cottage in France, and you will acknowledge that, though they were warmer, they were not finer than this is.”

He pointed towards the pale luminary as he spoke, and the stranger’s ring, which yet remained upon his finger, flashed brilliantly in the moonlight. Angelina caught his hand, drew it towards her, and stood for a moment with her eyes apparently fixed upon the ring, then fell insensible at his feet.

Alarmed, Gwynne Arthur raised her from the ground, and bore her quickly to his dressing-room; he knew not what to do, he dared not call for assistance, but hung over her motionless form in dreadful anxiety; what could have occasioned this sudden indisposition? how intensely she had gazed upon the ring! Ah! had she any knowledge of it? she perhaps could unravel the

mystery connected with the stranger. In a short time Angelina revived, and the earl tenderly enquired into the cause of her agitation.

“ Nothing particular,” she replied, “ but I have been rather indisposed during the whole of the day, and, perhaps, the cold night air caused my sudden faintness.”

“ But you gazed upon this ring, Angela,—gazed wildly,—was not that the cause? Do you know aught concerning it?”

“ That ring?—I saw it not before. I knew not that it was in your possession: I caught your hand to preserve me from falling, and, whilst I leant upon it, I combatted with the weakness of my frame to retain animation; the effort, you saw, was useless,—but I perceived not your ring.”

Gwynne-Arthur was silent, and looked perplexed.

“ Allow me to look at the ring, Anthony.”

He gave it to her.

“ It is curiously ornamented,” said Angela, “ I never saw you wear it before.”

“ It has not long been in my possession.”

“ Indeed ! how came you by it ? ”

“ I found it.”

“ Found it ! good heaven ! when, and where ? ”

“ Since we last parted.”

“ But where ? ”

“ In a cottage, where we obtained shelter for the night.”

“ To whom did it belong ? ”

“ I know no more than what I have told you : I found it, and will carefully preserve it, until I meet the rightful owner, to whom, I hope, ere long, to restore it.”

Angela returned the ring, saying, at the same time, in a soothing voice, “ Dear Anthony, I meant not to harass you by my questions, but a woman’s curiosity is always perplexing,—you are not angry with me ? ”

“ Angry with you, my sweet bride ? Oh, heaven ! that is an impossibility ! ”

On the following day, Lord Gwynne-Arthur conducted his beautiful page to her rustic abode.

He sighed as he viewed the humble apartment prepared for her reception, but Angela felt happier in being away from the castle, as it was necessary for their mutual safety, until the long wished-for opportunity should arrive, when he could present her, without a doubt or apprehension, to the countess.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CHRISTMAS EVE.—PULGAN.³—

CHRISTMAS NIGHT.

'Twas at the silent evening hour,
A gallant Troubadour
Began to play Love's sweetest lay,
Beneath his lady's bower :
Each dulcet note on air did float,
In accents soft, in Lydian measure ;
' Disown not Love's sweet power,
Thou art his dearest treasure.
Haste love, 'tis I, thy faithful Troubadour !'

Ballad.

IT is now almost time to return to Mabel, whom we quitted some chapters back, after having taken leave of Sir Richard Gordon.

During the whole of that day her mind was in

a state of tumult : her recent interview with the baronet, and the intelligence which she, in every quarter, received, of the earl's approaching union with Miss Vaughan, were subjects which harrassed her without cessation. She was happy beyond expression, at the thought of having offered an apology to Sir Richard, and of having effected a reconciliation with the man whom she so sincerely esteemed and respected ; vexed that he should persist in his passion, and at her own inability to return it ; but miserable almost to desperation, as she thought on the faithlessness of Gwynne-Arthur.

“ I care not : ” she at length exclaimed, “ the heart that has so little sincerity is scarcely worth being sighed for ! ” and yet she sighed as she spoke, and repented that her lips had uttered aught against the honor and integrity of Gwynne-Arthur.

Her spirits were evidently agitated, and neither the tender attentions of Lucy, nor the lively prattle of Anne, had power to raise them. Little did she imagine that the bride of the earl

was at that moment within the walls of the castle,—that the very page whom she had encountered in the morning was Gwynne-Arthur's *wife!*

On the following day she was informed that the earl and countess had departed, with a small party, upon a rustic excursion: this seemed to afford her some relief, though she knew not why.

She had not yet written to Helen Mac-Alister, she therefore sat down for that purpose, and, whilst thus employed, remembered that she had not returned Lady Emma Racket's letter to Flora Langley, as she had intended to do. After having concluded her epistle to Helen, she addressed one to Miss Langley, and, as she was folding up the latter, Anne entered with a packet which had just arrived by the post from F—. Mabel caught it eagerly, it came from Lady Williams, and being the first epistle which she had received from her ladyship since her residence in the cwm, her eye glanced hastily over it.

“ You are writing,” said Anne. “ Are those letters to go by to-day’s post? because, if they are, it is almost time that they should be dispatched.”

“ I tremble so much,” said Mabel, putting her hand to her forehead, “ that I can neither seal nor direct them.”

“ Shall I do so for you?”

“ Thank you, here are the directions of each,” giving her a small memorandum-book, already opened, “ stay, I will endeavour to seal them, and then you can distinguish them more easily; in the mean time I must go to my apartment and peruse this letter. There, the black seal, with the thistle, and the motto “ *Wha dare meddle wi’ me?*” is for Miss Langley; and the red one, with two doves drawing a half tied cord, and “ *Le plus loin le plus serré,*” is for Miss Mac-Alister. Do not mistake them.”

“ I perfectly understand,” replied Anne, “ so now go and read your letter.”

Mabel went. The letter was kind, and contained money, which Mabel wanted, and felt

grateful for. In the mean time the post-boy waited outside the window whilst Anne directed the letters; but—was it chance, or fate, which directed her hand?—the thistle and the Scotch motto were dispatched to Miss Mac-Alister, whilst the two doves, the silken cord, and “*Le plus loin le plus serré*,” went flying off to Flora Langley. They were finished, and dispatched, ere Mabel re-appeared, who of course concluded, as also did the innocent cause of the error, that the letters had been sent to their respective destinations.

Mabel seldom walked out: every object in the cwm teemed with painful recollections, and at present her mind was not sufficiently strong to bear them with calmness.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones were now daily expected home, as their friend had recovered from his indisposition; and it was whilst waiting the return of this respected pair, that the arrival of the earl and countess with their party, from their rustic tour, was announced in the village. On

being informed of this, Mabel wished to leave the cwm immediately, and would have done so, had she not conceived that such an act would be an insult to the kindness and hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Jones, whose return it was her duty to await.

Christmas, with its holly and misletoe, its carols, its candles, and its gambols, was now fast approaching. Fresh company had arrived at the castle, and the gates were again thrown open to the poor, the middling, and the wealthy classes of society.

It was Christmas eve, a rousing fire burned brightly in the parlour of Dr. Jones's cottage, and threw its fanciful and vivid reflection over the pictures and glasses which ornamented the walls; the shutters were closed, but the evening carols of the peasant boys were heard, as their merry steps bounded along the cwm. Yanto entered from the garden, bending beneath an immense load of holly and misletoe, which he, and some of the peasants, had been gathering. He deposited his burthen in the hall, whilst

Anne and Mabel flew to him for supplies. They brought away as much as they could carry, and began to decorate the little sitting-room; Lucy Jones was rather indisposed, therefore did not participate in the amusements.

“There!” exclaimed Anne, as they proceeded in their employment. “I have placed a large bunch of holly over my father’s picture, and another of miseltoe over my mother’s: they will see it when they come in, Oh! how delighted they will be!”

Mabel sighed at these words. “This day three years,” said she; “I was ornamenting our own little cottage with holly and miseltoe, I placed some over my mother’s picture—I little thought—”

“Hush!” said Anne, “I will not hear what you thought three years ago: three years hence you will have to remember how happy we were this evening. Who can tell, Mabel, who or what you will be, three years hence? Perhaps a *countess*!”

“Or in my grave,” sighed Mabel, pensively.

“Indeed!” exclaimed Anne, with archness, “is *that* the only alternative if you should fail to be a countess?”

Mabel smiled at the meaning which she had unconsciously given to her expression, and replied, “I did not intend to say so, I have no wish to be a countess.”

“Not a little—latent—lingering wish, Mabel? I would be a countess to-morrow,—if any one would make me so.”

“I am sorry to hear it, for it leads me to imagine that you would not hesitate to sacrifice yourself for advancement.”

“Not for a little advancement, Mabel, nor for a *little money*; but I would for something *very great*: suppose an *earl* were to offer you his hand, would you refuse it?”

“I think,” said Lucy, with a smile, “her acceptance would entirely depend on *what* earl made the offer.”

Mabel blushed.

“Suppose the Earl of Castle Gwynne should

do so," continued Anne, "would you refuse him?"

"It is impossible to say," answered Mabel, "how far the impulse of the moment might tempt me: you must remember, Anne, that Lord Gwynne-Arthur, were he in ever so plain a situation in life, is still an *earl* in *himself*: I mean to say that he will ever carry the *nobleman* about him."

"That he will indeed!" exclaimed Anne, "and I only wish he would give me an opportunity of becoming Countess of Castle Gwynne."

"Who wishes to become Countess of Castle Gwynne?" asked a voice from the door, as the latch rose, and the minstrel entered the room. "Is it you, my lively pupil?" he asked, turning to Anne; but Anne hid her blushing face with her hands, and then burst into her own wild girlish laugh.

"I was only jesting, Valentine; I never meant to *have* the earl."

"Not without being solicited, I suppose,

Miss Anne: but could *you* refuse him if he were to offer himself?"

"Oh, yes indeed! I should never be able to conduct myself properly in so high a station."

"Propriety of conduct, my fair pupil, belongs not to wealth nor station: the good sense which is seated in the mind, and the virtue which holds its empire over the heart, will make a man act well in any situation; yet it requires a greater share of both these qualities to bear prosperity with a grace, than to support misfortune patiently."

"You astonish me, Valentine," exclaimed the inexperienced Anne, "what has a man to do when he suddenly acquires good fortune, but to be kind-hearted and generous, to remember his old friends, and to make new ones?"

"Such is his duty—such is his interest—" returned Valentine, "but how seldom does he attend to either: I have known integrity unimpaired by adversity, and pride unsubdued by misfortune; yet I have seen sudden prosperity obscure common sense, and stifle

the feelings of humanity: he who treads the path of sorrow learns to know himself and others, but he who swims down the stream of pleasure is unacquainted with either."

"That is true indeed," exclaimed Mabel, "but may I ask you a single question, Valentine? How can *you* know so much of the world, having spent your whole life in this retired hamlet?"

"Human nature is to be studied every where," replied Valentine, "and though I have seen less of the world than most people, I may have observed more acutely than many. Experience, and knowledge of mankind, are not so much to be acquired by a hurried concatenation of different events, as by a strict observation of those we may chance to encounter. But I am in haste, sweet ladies, I must repair to the castle: hearing your voices as I passed the window, I took the liberty of entering to enquire after your health, and seeing that you all are well, I must now depart. Fare ye as well as I have found you!" The minstrel bowed his white head, and retired.

It was not long ere the ladies also retired to their apartments, but not before Anne had obtained from Mabel a promise to accompany her to Pulgan on the following morning.

On entering her chamber, Mabel could fain have exclaimed with Goldsmith,

“ Oh ! Memory, thou fond deceiver,
Still importunate and vain ;
To former joys recurring ever,
And turning all the past to pain ! ”

She hastily sought her pillow, and endeavoured to drown in slumber the agitation of her mind.

She had not slept long, ere she was roused by what she imagined to be the sound of the waitts, that beautiful midnight music, which, with a fascinating charm, breaks upon the silence of the long and cold English Christmas nights. Shortly afterwards the waitts appeared to stop beneath her window ; she thought she heard the sound of Valentine’s harp, and listened attentively : in a little while she was convinced that the minstrel himself was there, for he played one of his favorite ballads. When the

performance had ceased, the sound of whispering voices was heard; she crept from her bed towards the window, but feared to advance, lest her form should be observed by those below; she now distinctly heard the tone of Valentine's voice. In a few moments the harp was struck again, but not by the hand of the village minstrel; Oh, no! the instrument breathed quite a different spirit, the music was foreign, it was the air of an Italian song, a voice floated upon the tones of the harp,—a clear, mellow, manly voice—the voice of him whom she esteemed above every other being in creation:—of Sir Richard Gordon. These were the words, and addressed to herself.

Awake! and hear these notes of woe!

Such notes (they pierce my scorched brain)

Might penetrate thy soul, but thou

Could'st never feel for other's pain.

You bade me quench the rising flame,

You bade me check the hopes which grew,

I did:—it cleft my heart in twain,

And half still fondly clings to you,

For, know, my heart is like this lute,

Whose quivering echoes tremble yet:

Its tones—its feelings—all are mute,

But oh! it never can forget.

Farewell! farewell! a long farewell!

'Tis death to use that word to *you*,

Who feels what *I* have felt, can tell

Its agonies.—Adieu! adieu!

Mabel stood like a statue at the window, as she listened to the fine voice of her generous lover.

“And is it for me” she exclaimed, “that he lingers thus in the village? Oh, my noble-hearted friend! would that you had given your love to some one more deserving of it!” Tears dropped silently from her eyes, and she felt with what soul-devotedness she could attach herself to the generous, the manly Gordon, had she never known, or could cease to remember, the object of her early attachment—Gwynne-Arthur.

In a short time the voice ceased, and, having run over a beautiful cadence, the harp again became silent; a low whispering, and the faint

sounds of retreating footsteps, warned her that they had departed.

Mabel again retired to her pillow, surprise at the unexpected return of the baronet for some time kept her waking, and, ere she had finally sunk to sleep, Anne tapped at her chamber-door, informing her that it was time to dress to attend Pulgan. On entering the room, Anne informed Miss Glendower that her sister was not very well, therefore would not join them this morning. In a short time Mabel was equipped, and they descended to the hall, where Yanto was already in attendance; he bore a bright flaming torch in his hand, and preceded them at a moderate distance to the church.

“It is strange,” said Mabel, as they walked along, “that, although I have been born and bred in this village, I never before attended Pulgan. Oh! Anne,” she suddenly exclaimed, “what light is that? surely some place must be on fire!”

Anne looked in the direction to which she pointed: it was a dark cloudy morning, scarcely

a star was visible in the heavens; yet upon the hill, at the back of the castle, they perceived an immense blaze, the red and vivid reflection of which shone upon the river below.

“It is not a house on fire,” said Anne, “observe, it is quite a steady light, and brilliant;—it is moving over the hill,—it comes towards us:—now I have discovered the phenomenon, Mabel, it is a party from the castle, coming to Pulgan, attended by their torch bearers. Let us hasten to the church before they arrive.”

Mabel willingly consented, and in a short time they reached the church-porch; here they turned to look back, and perceived by the light of the flambeaux that the party was rapidly advancing. Mabel smiled as she contrasted the humble appearance of their own little torch with this brilliant display; but hastened to the pew, lest they should be seen and recognised.

In a few moments the countess's party arrived; they entered the church in order similar to that in which they had approached it; the earl and

countess were in front, each bearing a small flambeau, Percival and Miss Vaughan followed, and Lady Frances Gwyer with another gentleman made up the party; two torch bearers preceded them, two walked on each side, a multitude of torches borne by domestics, and some of the peasantry, followed; they advanced up the aisle in regular order, towards a handsome pew lined with scarlet cloth, and where "The Earl of Castle Gwynne," appeared in gilt letters upon the door. This pew, as well as the whole interior of the church, was amply and tastefully decorated with holly and misletoe; the candles were already lit, and the torches were now arranged round the edge of the pew.

All this Mabel observed attentively from her humble station near the church-door. The gentlemen had, of course, taken off their hats on entering the church, and she had now an opportunity of once more beholding that beloved countenance, but one glance was sufficient: she dared not trust herself with more:—those features were *his* whom she had been taught to

love. She knelt down during the whole of the service, for she was conscious that to look up would be but to distract her mind from the sacred rites of religion. In her prayers she mingled the name of Gwynne-Arthur. She prayed for his happiness and prosperity, and that he might long preserve that nobleness of soul and conduct which so eminently distinguished him: all her wrongs were forgotten and forgiven,—she prayed but to see him happy.

In those remote parts of the country, where people and refinement are so scarce, it is the fashion for the congregation to join in the hymns of praise which are offered up at the shrine of Omnipotence: the verse, therefore was given out, and the singers began. Every voice but Mabel's joined in the holy music: *she* dared not do so, she could not command sufficient firmness of tone to sing, she also feared that her voice might be recognised; but she was condemned to listen to one whose every tone drove anguish deep—and deeper into her heart,—to the voice of Gwynne-Arthur. The sacredness of the subject,

the chaste and holy scene, the hallowed spot, the amiability of his appearance, the voice of harmony, the method and stillness of a religious house, combining to throw a shade of awe upon surrounding objects, and their employment,—every thing was felt, and felt acutely. Never had Mabel experienced so much pleasure in quitting the house of worship as she did this morning.

No one presumed to leave the church before the earl and countess: the common people quitted their seats, and arranged themselves in two rows along the aisle through which they were to pass, and the party left their pew, as they had entered it. The earl held his hat in one hand, and a small torch in the other, whilst he bowed and smiled graciously in return to the numerous salutations which were offered to him as he passed through this little file of happy hearts and cheerful countenances.

The light of the torch which he bore, fell full upon the face of Gwynne-Arthur, as he passed the pew where Mabel sat, and she again beheld


the beautiful smile which generally irradiated his expressive countenance; she unconsciously sighed, the inspiration reached the ear of Winny Vaughan, who at that moment approached, and she looked around, her eye caught Mabel's, the latter blushed deeply, and the former looked surprised; Mabel beheld her face—that face which but to see was to love, and again sighed, for she thought, “If beauty can have power to attract, Miss Vaughan needs not to dread a rival!”

Anne and Mabel mingled in the crowd which followed the earl and countess; they saw them depart, they watched the light of their torches as they waved over the hill, and waited until the last glimmering of the flambeaux had disappeared, then hastened towards their own habitation.

“Oh Lucy!” exclaimed Anne, as they met at breakfast, “we have seen such a lovely sight; the young earl, with the countess and several others, attended Pulgan: it was beautiful to see

the humility with which they entered the church, each bore a torch, although they had many attendants; Miss Vaughan also accompanied them; did you see her face, Mabel? is it not a handsome one?"

Mabel assented languidly, and turned the conversation.



During the whole of that day, Mabel's mind was in a state of continual agitation, she could neither read, write, nor think, with satisfaction; she therefore stationed herself at the window to watch the villagers going, neat, and trimly dressed, to the festival at the castle. In the evening, in compliance with the wish of Anne, Lucy and Mabel prepared to attend Divine Service. As they quitted the cottage, with Yanto bearing a flambeau before them, the still, bright light of the torches was again seen, advancing down the hill from the castle, and in a short time the party came in sight. Mabel complained of sudden indisposition, and Lucy, taking the hint, begged Anne to return with

them, and relinquish her intention of going to church, to which the good-natured girl readily consented.

As they retraced their steps, they beheld several groups of flambeaux winding over the adjacent hills, and advancing towards the village: so forcible a pattern had the noble proprietors of the castle set, that every family, within reach, repaired to the church with their torch-bearers.

“I feel a presentiment of something dreadful,” said Mabel, as they entered the house, “how I wish the night were over! Oh that I could weep! but my feelings seem pent up with expectation, and I am almost suffocated, yet know not what I have to fear.”

“You have the vapours,” said Anne, “a lively tune on the piano will cure them: listen to me,” she sprung to the instrument, and rattled away for some time, then entreated Mabel to occupy her station.

“I am not in spirits to play,” replied Mabel, “the effort would be useless.”

“Nay, you are smiling at this moment, you only *imagine* yourself low-spirited.”

Mabel *did* smile at these words, and taking her seat at the piano, complied with her request.

When the song was concluded, the ladies took their seats round the fire, and Anne produced a volume of “Florence Macarthy,” to read aloud; stopping at intervals to express her intense admiration of the Commodore. “I am in love with that man,” she exclaimed, “I never knew any one like him.”

Mabel sighed, she had known *one* like him, but *only* one.

“Do you not admire De Vere, also?” asked Lucy.

“Yes, but he is too fanciful: the Commodore displays man in all his native superiority. Mabel,” she continued, turning archly towards Miss Glendower, “what is love?”

“It is useless to tell you,” answered Mabel, “you would not understand it, for no one can know *love* until he feels it.”

“ If I mistake not,” said Anne, laughing, “ it is what the Dutchman termed the Englishman’s beverage (punch): ‘ a little of the *strong*, and a little of the *weak*, a little of the *sour*, and a little of the *sweet*.’ ”

“ You so well comprehend it,” replied Mabel with a smile, “ that I think you might instruct *me*, and not require *my* instructions.”

“ But I understand only the theory, dear Mabel; you, very probably, are acquainted with the practice.”

“ Go on with the chapter,” said Mabel, “ it is possible you may have your share of experience before long.”

“ But what is love *like*?” repeated Anne, “ explain that to me, and I will then continue reading.”

“ Love,” answered Miss Glendower, “ is like a chain of steel, girt around with roses; in a short time the colours fade, the leaves decay and fall off, whilst the thorns and the steel alone remain to pierce deep into the trusting soul;

yet,—

· You may break—you may ruin the *chain*, if you will,
But the *scent* of the rose-leaves will hang round it still.”

Anne smiled at this conclusion, but not with glee, for she perceived that the expressions which she had drawn from Mabel, were accompanied by emotion. She turned again to her book, and spent some time in the perusal of one of the best novels that have ever yet been written. Mabel's watch lay on the table, Lucy looked at it, and informed her sister that it was time to cease reading : it was exactly twelve o'clock.

“ I had no idea that it was so late,” exclaimed Anne, “ but I must finish this chapter, Lucy, it is not much, only five—six—seven pages.”

She was proceeding, when a noise without the window startled them ; it resembled a human voice, it was not the tone of command, supplication, nor conversation ; it was like the groan of bodily anguish. The three terrified girls arose from their seats, and gazed upon each other in apprehension.

“ Oh, it is nothing,” exclaimed Anne, recovering her spirits. “ I declare I had almost fancied myself shut up with the commodore and De Vere in Court Fitzadelm ; sit down, and listen to the conclusion of this chapter.”

In a short time the chapter was finished, and the book put away, whilst the ladies once more drew nearer to the fire ere they separated for the night. Anne proposed amusing them with a ghost-story.

“ For heaven’s sake do not think of such a thing !” exclaimed Lucy, “ we have had a sufficient fright already.”

“ But it is a little, short story, that will not occupy more than a quarter of an hour.”

“ Well, if Miss Glendower has an extreme *penchant* for such themes, I make no objection.”

“ With Anne’s permission,” said Mabel, “ we will defer the story until day-light, for the scene, the hour, and our feelings, are, at present, too much in unison with the subject.”

The loud bark of a dog was now succeeded

by a low and dismal growl, prolonged almost to incredibility. There is a superstition prevalent in Wales, that a dog howls beneath the window of any person fated to die within the year, from which even the most enlightened minds are not altogether free.

Lucy said pensively, "Some of our friends are going." but Mabel, ashamed that her English education should be obscured by native superstition, firmly asserted that the little pug-dog was merely crying for admittance.

"I think so too," said Anne, glad to catch at any thing to bear her courage up, "listen, he is scratching at the door, I will tell Yanto to let him in."

She arose from her seat for that purpose, and at the parlour door encountered the boy, with the two women-servants; they also had heard the appalling howl of the dog, and had flown hither as a refuge from their fears.

Anne desired him to open the front door, whilst he, in humble language, endeavoured to convince her of the impropriety of offending

the pookha, and of risking the possibility of meeting him face to face. Anne was peremptory, Yanto loath, and whilst they were debating on the most proper measures to be adopted, Mabel slipped by, and opened the door of the cottage.

It was a clear and cold star-light night, the moon was not visible, but her absence was amply recompenced by the bright gems which glittered in the face of heaven. A dusky form was stretched along the path which led to the cottage, a black dog stood over the figure, howling in a most distressing manner, and at intervals raising the hem of his master's cloak in his mouth, as though entreating him to rise and come away. The first and sole idea which flashed upon the mind of Mabel was, that the stranger could be no other than Sir Richard Gordon, who had, perhaps, met with some fatal accident in approaching her dwelling : with the fleetness of thought she rushed forward, and the party within perceiving the action, immediately followed.

The man lay upon his face, one arm rested beneath his forehead; she bent down and perceived his fair light locks dappled with blood; with a dreadful and agonizing foreboding, accompanied by a preternatural strength of body, Mabel turned him upon his side, and shrieked wildly as she recognised the death-like, stiffened features.

“ Merciful heaven! It is the earl! it is Lord Gwynne-Arthur!” exclaimed Anne and Lucy at the same moment, attempting to raise Mabel from the lifeless form; but she clung madly, fondly to it, and though she spoke not, nor wept, her glazing eyes were fixed intensely upon the livid countenance, as though they fain would pierce into

“ The depths of that deep trance, whose stillness seems
A dark, eternal sleep,—”

Yanto was immediately dispatched to call a neighbour's son, and, with their united assistance, the earl was conveyed into the cottage; he was placed on a sofa near the fire, and

Mabel still hung over him, with the same chilled aspect of fond despair.

“Mabel,” whispered Lucy, “remember that the earl requires our aid : this is not a time for indulging vain apprehensions, he is not dead, and if we could procure proper assistance I doubt not that he would soon recover.”

“Oh, my God!” exclaimed Mabel, wildly, “will no one run for assistance ; will no one go to the castle?”

“I have just dispatched Yanto thither,—but take this lavender, bathe his temples, and his hands.”

Lucy was exceedingly alarmed at the silent and horror-stricken appearance of Miss Glendower, and gave her employment in order to preserve her fainting spirits.

Mabel knelt down beside him, and, opening his cloak to give him air, perceived that his waistcoat was stained with blood which proceeded from a wound in the side ; she started back in fresh alarm. Brandy was brought, and a small quantity forced between his lips ; still no

signs of animation appeared. Anne had now the presence of mind to loosen his cravat, and finding a hair chain which she imagined might press too tightly on his throat, she unclasped it, and gave it to the care of Mabel, who, for the present, deposited it within her work-box.

A faint sigh now announced returning life ; it is impossible to describe the revolution of feeling which this little sigh created in the anxious bosoms of those around him : Mabel clasped her hands, and uttered an ejaculation of thankfulness to heaven ; she took his hand in hers, it was no longer stiff, but his eyes were still closed ; she felt his pulse, it beat, but very slowly. “And what hand,” thought she, “what murderous hand has dared to effect this dreadful deed?” She again knelt beside him, and waited with all the impatience of alarm and horror, for the arrival of surgical assistance.

In a short time the sound of carriage-wheels was heard, they stopped at the cottage-door, hurried footsteps sounded in the hall, the door of the apartment flew back, whilst a lovely and

majestic woman, followed by several other persons, glided into the room; she looked at the couch whereon lay the lifeless form of Gwynne-Arthur, clasped her hands, gave one wild shriek, then sunk insensible upon the floor. This was the countess: Mabel recognised her by the glance which she had cast towards her son. Those who attended her flew to her assistance, whilst the surgeon who accompanied them (the apothecary of her ladyship's household) hastened to the earl.

Having succeeded in restoring animation, the surgeon and some others conveyed him into one of the sleeping apartments of the cottage, where they examined his wound: it was in the right side, and deep though not dangerous; but, more than this, they found that his left arm was broken, which they judged must have been occasioned by falling on the frozen earth after having received the wound. They re-set the broken arm, and dressed the wound in Gwynne-Arthur's side, ere he had regained sufficient recollection to speak, and he then faintly enquired

what had happened; but the surgeon positively refused to hold any conversation with him in his present weak state, and he again sunk into a stupor, which was not sleep, though greatly resembling it.

In the meantime the countess had revived, she was half reclining on a sofa, awaiting in dreadful expectation the report of the surgeon who was attending the earl. Winny sat by her, bathed in tears, and supporting Lady Gwynne-Arthur's head upon her bosom. Lady Frances Gwyer (for, on the arrival of the horrible intelligence at the castle, all the guests had been alarmed) stood near, pale with affright, and unable to offer any consolation to her distressed friend. William Percival was leaning against the end of the sofa, anxious and agitated; several other persons were also in the room. Lucy Jones was busied with the female servants in furnishing the surgeon with every article which he required, Anne, whose vivacity had long since taken wing, stood in a corner of the apartment almost out of sight; and Mabel

was nearly concealed from observation by her harp, behind which she had retired.

Messengers had been dispatched to F— for surgeons, and peace officers to apprehend the murderer, if he should be discovered; whilst numerous scouts had been sent round the cwm, and its environs, to endeavour to secure the delinquent: in short the whole village had been raised.

“Oh! my God!” exclaimed the countess, bursting into a paroxysm of maternal anguish, “And must he die? so young, so generous, so free from stain! What has he done, that his life should be thus inhumanly torn from him?”

“I cannot think,” said Percival, “but that this is the work of some secret enemy: none other could have attempted it: he is the idol of the village, and of all who know him.”

“And *what* enemy?” exclaimed the countess, “he never *had* an enemy:—he never *deserved* one!”

A little man, who stood in a corner of the apartment, with grey eyes and sallow complexion,

and who generally, though, perhaps, without any evil intention, played Marplot in every scene that was going forward, began to speak vehemently of the nobleness and generosity of the unfortunate earl; declaring that he had never observed sharp words or angry looks pass between his lordship and any other, except Sir Richard Gordon, during the baronet's late visit at the castle. Mabel Glendower had hitherto sat in motionless despair, and momentary expectation of a report that the earl had expired; she had not listened to the passing conversation, until the name of Sir Richard Gordon, coupled with suspicion, struck upon her ear; when regardless of the presence in which she stood, advancing a pace, which brought her in front of the assembly, she said, addressing the unlucky speaker,—

“ Do you dare to say that it was by *his* act he fell? do you dare insinuate that it is the hand of Sir Richard Gordon which has been raised against the life of Lord Gwynne-Arthur? Sir Richard did not do this deed, shame on you for

the evil thought ! The heart that can presume to attach suspicion upon that honourable man, is also capable of the crime with which it accuses him ! ” She turned away, overpowered by her feelings, and burst into tears.

The company had listened to her with attention and amazement : till now they had not even been conscious of her presence, and their surprise was great to find that, before suspicion could be pointed towards Sir Richard Gordon, his name should be so warmly defended by this cottage-girl ; for a cottage-girl they judged her to be, not from her personal appearance, but from the circumstance of being found to dwell in a cottage.

They were astonished to discover that she was even acquainted with him ; the countess, in particular, heard her with peculiar interest ; she admired the honest indignation which spoke in her expressive face, and the unaffected nobleness, which, disdaining all prudish considerations, *dared* to speak openly in vindication of one she esteemed ; her voice too had some-

thing familiar in it, yet the countess knew not how this could happen, for she was conscious that she had never before beheld her. Winny Vaughan looked round, surprised and anxious, as she heard the fame of the baronet so warmly supported, and felt a little degree of astonishment and chagrin, as she recognised the countenance of the interesting stranger, whom she had beheld that morning in the church.

Those who saw Mabel's tears imagined that they were the effect of indignation, at the idea of an accusation being preferred against Sir Richard Gordon; for herself, she knew that they had no definite cause: they were produced by a conflict of strong and varying emotions, and had, at least, the power of easing the agitation of her frame, though not of entirely quelling it.

In a short time the surgeon entered the room, and informed the countess that his lordship's wound was by no means dangerous, that it had been dressed—that the broken bone had also been re-set—that he had now sunk into

a peaceful slumber, and, for the present, no bad consequences could be apprehended; yet his situation was still such as to require the utmost attention and care.

Lady Gwynne-Arthur's feelings were again nearly over-powered by this welcome intelligence, but tears came to her relief, and she, also, wept. The surgeon retired to the apartment of the earl, and Percival accompanied him, intending to watch his friend until the necessary attendants could be procured.

It was now two o'clock in the morning. A multitude of footsteps and a soft knock were heard at the outer door, Anne went into the hall to learn the business of these visitors, and in a few moments returned; she looked timidly around, then in a low voice informed Lady Frances Gwyer, who appeared to be the only one sufficiently collected to listen to her, that the murderer was taken. "He was found," said she, shuddering as she spoke, "near the very spot

where we discovered the earl—in our own garden!”

“Who first found the earl?” asked the officious little man, with the grey eyes, “for, in a court of justice, that person must come forward as the principal witness.”

“We all saw him at the same moment.” replied Anne.

“But who first reached the spot, or touched him?”

Anne glanced round towards Mabel, and the questioner perceiving the direction of her eyes, ceased to interrogate.

About three o'clock the surgeon arrived from F—. He hastened to the apartment of the earl, and shortly afterwards returned to inform the countess that every thing wore a favourable appearance; he said he should remain with his patient that night, and entreated her ladyship to seek repose; but this she was incapable of doing, and being informed that the officers of justice had arrived at the castle, she preferred

going thither, and seeing the prisoner delivered into custody.

I need not speak of Mabel's agitation, on hearing that the murderer had been taken: she felt an unconquerable desire to behold him, whoever he might be, because he had dared to raise his arm against the life of Gwynne-Arthur.

As Percival intended to remain with the earl, one seat in the carriage was vacant, and Lady Frances Gwyer whispered to Mabel, as they were about to depart, "Miss Jones, if you will accompany us, I shall be much obliged, for I fear Lady Gwynne-Arthur's spirits will never carry her through."

Glad to find that she was not known, and eager to have an opportunity of beholding the culprit, Mabel assented, and sprung lightly into the carriage; she took her seat beside Lady Frances Gwyer, and the party drove away in silence.

What a current of thought rushed across the mind of Mabel at this moment: what surprising

events had occurred within the last few hours! A little while ago, Gwynne-Arthur had been in the full enjoyment of health, surrounded by pleasures,—far from, and thoughtless of her. A little while ago, she and the countess had been utter strangers, without the slightest prospect or expectation of meeting. Now was Gwynne-Arthur lying ill, wounded, and miserable, within her own abode, a claimant on her feelings for the common attentions of humanity; and she herself accompanying the countess to her castle,—and for what purpose?—to behold the enemy, perhaps the murderer of the earl!

By the time they reached the castle, Lady Gwynne-Arthur had recovered sufficient composure to thank Mabel, whom she addressed as Miss Jones, for the prompt attention which her son had met with, and the kindness which had been evinced towards him.

As the carriage stopped at the gates, the ladies perceived that the outer court was crowded with the peasantry, who had assembled

there, eager to behold the wretch whom in their hearts they cursed, for the base and treacherous deed which threatened to deprive them of so beloved a master.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PRISONER.

Some airy devil hovers in the sky,
And pours down mischief,—

King John.

“I will stand by thee, when thou art most distress;
And, when thou art most in need, I’ll serve thee best.”

IT was still quite dark, lamps had been placed in the castle-yard; and the countess walked from her carriage to the hall, amid the suppressed exclamations of horror and pity which buzzed through the multitude. They bowed silently to her as she passed, but they uttered no expressions of pleasure at beholding her. The countess was supported between Miss Vaughan and Lady Frances, whilst Mabel fol-

lowed alone. At any other period she would have been hurt by this apparent neglect, but at present her mind was so entirely engrossed by other subjects, that she was even unconscious of experiencing it.

The party proceeded slowly to the banquetting room, where they understood the officers of justice were in waiting, and where the prisoner would be rendered up to them. The lights which were burning on the preceding evening, were now flickering in their sockets, half extinguished, and threw a sickly beam over surrounding objects: the traces of recent festivity still remained, the holly hung in profusion around the walls, the chairs and forms, which had not yet been replaced, were now occupied by a set of people, denominated "gazers," the domestics of the castle had eagerly assembled in the music-gallery, whilst a portion of the crowd had found ingress into the lower part of the hall; and the ladies advanced to the top, where chairs had been placed for their accommodation, and near which stood the ministers of the law. The

guests, who had by this time equipped themselves in their morning habiliments, were already in the hall, waiting the return of the countess, and the commitment of the murderer, an event to which they looked forward with a mingled emotion of satisfaction and horror.

Mr. Jenkins was the first who approached the countess: the reason why this gentleman had not accompanied her to the cottage is, that he had deemed it more necessary to stay at the castle, and use every exertion for the detection of the criminal, especially as his assistance could not be required: the house surgeon having attended her ladyship thither. He informed Lady Gwynne-Arthur that the suspected murderer had been taken near the spot where the earl was found, at about three quarters past one o'clock; that he had not yet seen him, but had ordered the domestics to lock him up in a strong room in the south turret, until legal assistance should be procured; and as soon as her ladyship found her nerves sufficiently strong to witness

the scene, the prisoner should be brought forward.

The countess sighed, and for some moments did not reply. The visitors took their seat at the upper end of the hall, Winny and Lady Frances stood beside the countess, Mabel was situated a little behind her ladyship, yet the view which she obtained of the scene of action was equally advantageous ; Mrs. Forrester sat near her, and, not having observed her countenance amongst the guests on the preceeding evening, eyed her with many a curious glance.

Several enquiries passed through the assembly, as to whether any of them had yet beheld the prisoner, but the answers were given invariably in the negative.

The crowd of spectators who had congregated in the hall, fell back from the door of the passage, which led to the south turret, and drew up into a posse on each side.

The cheek of the countess turned red and pale, by turns, as she sat in momentary expect-

tation of the appearance of the prisoner. Winny Vaughan felt all that emotion which the scene was likely to inspire in a young and amiable heart; whilst the soul of Mabel was agitated by a thousand different feelings: the countess's evident partiality to Miss Vaughan, would have convinced her,—had she needed conviction,—of the truth of the report she was constantly hearing; she felt as though this were to be the closing scene of her existence, that she could not long survive the present period of anguish, and, if Gwynne-Arthur should *die*, the same moment would also deprive *her* of life.

The tread of masculine footsteps now sounded in the aisle leading from the south turret, and the crowd bent forward in eager expectation. A man entered the hall in a hurried manner, it was a domestic, he bore a lamp in his hand, and looked up the passage he had just quitted. A firm and measured step approached,—it came nearer—and in the next moment the prisoner, strictly guarded by *four* of the countess's serving-men, entered the hall. He was of majestic

stature, his mein and step were noble and commanding, a long dark cloak shrouded his form, and the hat which he wore, aided by a large cravat tied high and close around his throat and chin, nearly concealed his features. He advanced with the same dignified pace to the centre of the room, opposite the spot where sat the countess and her guests, where, bowing gracefully, though proudly, he drew off his hat, and discovered to the astonished multitude the countenance of—Sir Richard Gordon!

A universal burst of astonishment escaped all present, not excepting even the countess: with a faint scream Winny sunk back into the arms of Mrs. Forrester and Mabel, who applied restoratives to her, without exciting observation, and at the same moment a long--wild--agonising shriek, issued from the music-gallery, where the servants had assembled. An interruption so uncommon, and from a quarter so unexpected, attracted all eyes towards the spot, and, amongst them, those of the noble prisoner. Mr Jenkins darted from the hall, and in a few moments was

seen in the gallery, bearing away in his arms the page of Gwynne-Arthur, who had mingled in the crowd to obtain a view of the accused, and had fainted with the shock which others had in some degree received.

The senses of Mabel were harrowed up to intensity by this event: the full conviction of the baronet's innocence and wrongs, rushed like a torrent upon her mind, and leaning down towards Winny, who had now revived, she said, with the smile of agony (than which nothing is more dreadful) "If your agitation is caused by a suspicion of Sir Richard's guilt, it is needless: he is not guilty of this crime, I affirm it, and *will* affirm it, to the last moment of existence."

The fainting girl caught new courage and support from these words, especially as Mrs. Forrester declared that she also was perfectly convinced that he was much injured.

Lady Gwynne-Arthur had given but one glance towards the prisoner, and now sat stupefied by anguish, with her face buried in her handkerchief. When the electric shock of

surprise had subsided, and silence was obtained, Sir Richard Gordon thus addressed the countess.

“Am I to consider this sudden introduction into your ladyship’s presence as the effect of a frolic, or of a more serious intention? Though I have been nearly three hours a prisoner within these walls, I am yet ignorant why I should be so: Do I stand before you, lady, as an offender, or as a friend?”

A doubtful smile played on his countenance as he spoke, and a blush of confusion mounted to his cheek, notwithstanding the *hauteur* which settled on his brow.

“*Friend!*” exclaimed the countess indignantly, as the image of her bleeding son once more swam before her distracted senses, “*friend!* better had you never appeared within these walls, than to have entered them for the base purpose which you have now truly—too truly effected.”

Sir Richard folded his arms across his breast, and drew up to his height; his eye beamed

brighter, and the glow on his cheek deepened ; he feared not to look around,—he did so,—amongst the group of faces which surrounded the countess he saw a *beloved* one, and that was the only thing which had power to discompose, in the slightest degree, the proud tranquillity of unsullied honor. He almost disdained to reply, yet the individual who addressed him, was a *woman*, perhaps an *injured* woman, though *he* was not the aggressor.

“ Your ladyship’s expressions are harsh,” he said sternly, “ until you condescend to name, ‘ the head and front of my offending,’ I must decline answering them.”

“ Where is the Lord Gwynne-Arthur ?” cried the countess, in a tone of anguish.

“ Aye, *where* is the Lord Gwynne-Arthur ;” repeated the baronet, unconsciously, and glancing round the assembly as he spoke, “ *where* is the Lord Gwynne-Arthur ? if there is any charge to prefer against me, why is not the earl present to confirm it ?”

Had the prisoner been any other than Sir

Richard Gordon, many would have answered this seemingly taunting speech, but to *him* none dared to reply: though he stood alone, unsupported, unfriended, and stained by suspicion, he appeared an army in himself: the glance of his eye forbade the remark as it was rising to the lips of the speaker. He

“———Stood, as stands the mountain-oak,
Which scarcely bends beneath the thunder-stroke;
Or as a rock which lightnings vainly sear,
And cannot pierce the thing they’re forced to spare.”

The countess was silent for some moments: she seemed struggling with some powerful emotion, then rising slowly, from her seat, she said, emphatically, as she waved her hand to the officers to approach the baronet, “the earl is, ere this, perhaps, in the sleep of death: let your conscience answer for the deed!”

“The Earl of Castle-Gwynne,” said Mr. Jenkins, who now entered the hall, “was this morning discovered wounded, and almost lifeless, near the spot where you, Sir Richard,

I am sorry to say, were, shortly afterwards, arrested."

"Good heaven!" exclaimed the baronet, for the first time betraying intense emotion, "is the earl murdered? and is it me you accuse of being the assassin? of having destroyed the life of one, to whom I was—if not a friend—at least not an enemy? the accusation is false!"

"Nothing could give me more heart-felt pleasure," replied Mr. Jenkins, "than the conviction of your innocence, for, in my heart, Sir Richard, I feel assured of it. If you can produce witnesses, send for them immediately, that the awkwardness of your situation may be alleviated."

"I have none," said the baronet, proudly, "but my own assertions, which have never yet been doubted."

"Alas!" sighed Jenkins, "they will little avail you here."

The officers now approached the baronet to conduct him to the place they had destined for him; he neither moved nor spoke, but rivetted

on them one of his freezing glances, and even *they* were, for a moment, deterred from their purpose. At the same instant a sweet voice from the music-gallery was heard to exclaim, in a tone of heart-rending sorrow, "He is innocent! Oh, heaven, he is innocent!" "He is innocent!" was re-echoed by two voices near the countess, whilst they who uttered it shrunk immediately from observation: they were the voices of Mabel and Winny, guided by the same impulse but not by the same feeling. Sir Richard stood calm and unmoved amid the crowd, whilst one of the officers observed that if the earl was in a situation to give any kind of evidence, they should know better how to act. "For," said he, "if his lordship can say by whom he was attacked, we can go upon surer grounds: this gentleman may or may not be guilty of the crime with which he is accused: a written document from the hand of the earl, or a verbal testimony, delivered in the presence of proper witnesses, would be sufficient to

liberate the prisoner from the horrible charge which has been brought against him."

"Never did mortal mixture of earth's mould, breathe such divine enchanting ravishment" over the senses of Mabel and Winny, as did these few words, proceeding from the uncouth lips of an illiterate peace-officer.

"Thanks, gracious heaven! he will be saved!" ejaculated Mabel.

"Who will accompany me to the village?" exclaimed Winny, the slumbering energies of her nature for the first time roused into action. "Who will go to the earl? somebody—somebody come with me!"

"*I* will," said Mabel.

Miss Vaughan gratefully caught her hand, and gliding through a side door, near which they were situated, flew with her along the intricate aisles of the castle.

Even at that moment, though Mabel's hopes and fears were excited to the uttermost pitch, for the two dearest beings on earth, she yet trembled at the touch of Winny Vaughan,—for, she

pressed the hand of her rival,—of one who, if Gwynne-Arthur should recover, would shortly become his *wife*.

At the door of the hall they turned to take a last glance of the object of their mutual anxiety, as though they feared that even their absence would be productive of evil to him. Winny, followed by Mabel, flew across the castle-yard, and sprung into the carriage, which was still in waiting, according to Mr. Jenkins's orders, to convey the criminal to the goal at F——.

“To Dr. Jones's cottage,” exclaimed Mabel, “to the house where the earl is lying.”

A light form darted along an obscure aisle leading from the banqueting-hall, it approached the carriage as the door was closing, it was the French boy, Gwynne-Arthur's page.

“Ladies,” he exclaimed, hastily, and in English, “forgive my intrusion—I must accompany you,—you seek to obtain proofs of Sir Richard Gordon's innocence, and *I* can procure them from Lord Gwynne-Arthur, though *you* should *fail* to do so,” he waited for no reply,

but leaped into the carriage, and the vehicle drove away.

Not a word passed between the trio until they arrived at the cottage: Winny forgot that she was accompanied by one who had caused her so much uneasiness by defending the fame of Sir Richard Gordon, she only felt that she was about to procure his liberty; but Mabel still remembered that she was seated beside her who was destined to become the bride of Gwynne-Arthur.

When the carriage reached the place of its destination, before the steps could be let down, the page sprung from the vehicle, and the ladies immediately followed. The door of the cottage was opened by Yanto, and Mabel rushed into the house, for she considered that one moment lost might plunge her friend into misery and disgrace. She hastily ascended the stairs, followed by the page and Winny, but having reached the door of the apartment where the earl lay, stopped suddenly, and for the first time reflected on her intention.

“ Oh heaven ! what can be done ? ” exclaimed Winny in dreadful alarm, unable to restrain her impatience, yet incapable of proceeding, “ another moment may seal his condemnation.”

“ No,” said the page, firmly, as he stood behind them, “ not all the powers on earth can do so ! ”

Impelled by the anxiety of her companions, and by her own agitated feelings, Mabel tapped oftly at the bed-room door. It was opened by Percival.

“ How is the earl ? ” was the first enquiry.

“ Rather better,” was the reply. “ But he is sleeping.”

“ Can he not be spoken to ? ” demanded Winny with emotion, “ can you not communicate to him a subject of importance, Mr. Percival ? ”

“ Not in his present situation ; it may be attended by fatal consequences.”

“ Oh, but it is *such* a subject ! ” replied Winny, “ Sir Richard Gordon has been apprehended on suspicion of having attempted to

murder him, and nothing less than a declaration of his innocence, from the earl, can save the baronet from an unjust and disgraceful fate."

Percival's countenance appeared agitated, and his frame shook with contending emotions; he was horrified at hearing of the misfortune of his highly-respected friend, whilst all his worst suspicions were confirmed by the interest which Winny seemed to take in the affair. "The earl is sleeping," he said, in an indecisive tone, "he ought not to be disturbed."

"But remember," said Mabel, "that the reputation of an innocent and injured man hangs upon this crisis."

"So does the life of the earl," replied Percival.

What an anguishing moment for Mabel!—into what a dreadful situation were her two dearest friends plunged! Her perseverance would, perhaps, be attended by *death* to *one*; whilst, to the other, her neglect would bring sorrow, and disgrace *worse* than death.

The French boy now attempted to enter the chamber, but the surgeon, approaching the door, opposed his progress.

“ You cannot enter here,” he said, “ the earl is scarcely living : his existence hangs upon a thread which the slightest agitation may sever.”

“ But the life, the honour, the reputation of another demand his attention,” exclaimed the page. “ I must and *will* see him!”

“ Alas !” exclaimed Winny, bursting into tears, “ no one cares for Sir Richard Gordon, no one wishes to befriend him, and yet he would be a friend to any person who might require his assistance !”

“ Allow me to close the door,” said the surgeon, “ or our conversation may reach the ear of the invalid and discompose him.”

“ Not until you give me admission,” cried the page, wound up almost to frenzy, “ what is life to the loss of reputation ? by heaven, you shall *not* oppose me !”

He darted into the room as he spoke, ere the gentlemen were aware of his intention, and

drawing back the curtain presented himself at the side of Gwynne-Arthur's couch. The boy called on him by name to arise, and attend to his request. The earl opened his eyes, but languidly, and, for a few moments, was unconscious by whom he was addressed ; on perceiving Angela he saluted her with a faint smile, whilst she exclaimed, "say, my lord, were you wounded by Sir Richard Gordon? he is now in the castle, in the hands of the officers of justice, and your fiat must condemn or release him!"

Gwynne-Arthur had not strength to express the surprise which he felt, but answered in a low tone, for he was perfectly sane, "No ; nor do I believe him capable of such an act!"

"Thank God!" exclaimed Winny, who had advanced one pace within the chamber, and was listening anxiously to every syllable.

"This—this is the decisive moment!" cried Angela, "my lord can you write? *a word* will save him!"

The surgeon strongly remonstrated against this imprudent measure, with both the earl and

his page, but neither of them attended to him : Angela flew to a desk which lay near, and bringing thence the writing implements presented them, with a flushed cheek and a trembling hand, to Gwynne-Arthur. He took them—the exigence of the circumstances, and the excitement of the moment, nerved a hand which else had been powerless—he wrote the desired document, an action which astonished those who beheld it, and having been signed by the surgeon and Percival, both declaring the sanity of his lordship's mind, it was given into the hands of the agitated page.

Angela rushed from the apartment, held up the treasure to the view of Mabel and Winny, then flew down the stairs, and hastened to the carriage which was to convey them to the castle. Winny followed, impelled by her feelings ; and Mabel, conscious that she could be of no service to the earl by remaining, also returned to witness the triumph and liberation of the baronet.

It is our duty now to apprise our reader of the scene which was, in the interim, taking place at the castle.

Mabel and Winny had quitted the hall unnoticed, none but Mrs. Forrester was aware of their action, or could guess its motive; it is true the penetrating eye of the baronet had discovered their absence, but he knew not whither they were gone, and as all around him were silent and motionless, he spent some moments in reflection. He was, in the first place, astonished at this premature and unwished-for presentation at the castle, shocked at the idea of the crime with which he was accused, wondering how the affair would terminate, and contrasting his present situation in that hall with the time when he appeared there as the admired and esteemed guest of the countess; and then he thought of Gwynne-Arthur, by whom, and for what purpose, had he thus been brutally attacked? Remembrance now brought back the shriek which had proceeded from the music-gallery, and the

exclamation of “ He is innocent ! Oh heaven, he is innocent ! ” He sighed.

Whilst these thoughts were passing through his mind, a rush in another part of the hall called his attention that way. The crowd were separating to allow free passage to some one whom they seemed to greet with respect, and in the next moment the baronet beheld the countenance of a friend, and a valuable testimony of his innocence : he who approached was Valentine, the village minstrel.

On the preceding day he had been habited in the ancient costume of the *Beirdd*^b of the country, and had not yet divested himself of those habiliments ; his appearance therefore formed a striking contrast with the other part of the assembly. His white head was uncovered, but the hat which he held in his hand, and which he had taken off in the presence of his patroness, was encircled by a wreath of laurel and misletoe. He advanced with a majestic pace to the front of the assembly, and stationed himself beside Sir Richard Gordon.

“Lady,” he said, looking at the baronet, and then towards the countess, “Lady, I have eaten of thy bread, and drank of thy cup; I have been nurtured within thy walls and protected beneath thy roof; my forefathers dwelt with thy ancestors, and my ashes will repose under thy soil; think not, therefore, that *I* should rise up to say aught in injustice to the heir of Gwynne-Arthur, or should seek to shield his enemy from deserved punishment: that would be wronging you, and I have been taught by my fathers that it is the duty of christians to do wrong to none, to be merciful when it is in our power, and *just* at the *least*: I affirm to you that this honourable man is guiltless of the crime with which he is accused.”

“Can you prove it, Valentine?” asked the countess, with considerable emotion, “it is needless to say that, next to the restoration of my son, the conviction of Sir Richard Gordon’s innocence will give me the most heartfelt satisfaction,;

“Aye Lady, by proofs which are incontro-

vertible: I quitted this hall at eleven o'clock last night, for the purpose of meeting Sir Richard Gordon at a short distance from the village, and continued in his society until within a few minutes of the period of his apprehension; the earl was discovered in his present hapless situation, about the hour of one, or rather before, and appeared to have lain there some time; which must convince the unprejudiced that it was not by the hand of this injured man he fell. This is not a season to deal falsely with you: the life of our master, and the detection of guilt, hang upon this eventful moment; he who aimed the blow at the existence of Gwynne-Arthur should no longer be allowed to retain his own, 'why cumbereth he the ground?' But, oh, Lady! let not the just suffer for the unjust! Again I affirm to you that this honourable man is as innocent of the charge as thou art!"

The countess sobbed convulsively, she was unable to decide precisely on any point, but one of the officers remarked that the minstrel's evidence might be of service to the accused in a

court of justice, and had better be deferred until the case appeared there ; this man seemed anxious to perform all to which his office entitled him. The minstrel replied not to the observation, and the baronet stood erect, stern, and undaunted. Valentine approached nearer to the countess, he bent one knee to the ground.

“ Lady,” said the old man, in a calm but determined voice, “ I kneel not to crave mercy for the guilty, but to demand justice for the wronged. Remember the important charge you hold, remember, countess, that you are about to consign an unoffending, a noble being to infamy : the man who stands before you is innocent, he is a stranger in thy land, and hath been a sojourner beneath thy roof ; he hath sat at thy board, hath shared thy hospitality, and thou hast proffered to him the smile of welcome ; *I* am but an humble domestic, unworthy to speak to *thee*, or to plead for *him* : both are too noble to require my interference ; yet he appears in this hall disgraced, suspected, and injured, here are none to support him, he is a Saison, and

hath sprung from the race which has oppressed us ; but shall we deal harshly with him on that account? shall we repay the oppression of ages upon a guiltless individual? In what hath he offended, and wherefore is he thus disgraced? Lady, the detection of crime, the triumph of innocence,—nay more, the reputation of our country, depend on this critical period. shall the Cambry take a base advantage of the stranger who entereth peaceably into his land, and who, in the full confidence of honour, placeth himself beneath our protection, and relieth on our integrity—even though that stranger should be a Saison? Let us not disgrace the line from which we have descended, let us not tarnish the fame of our ancestors, let us not prove to the Saison that we are worthy of the chains with which they have galled us! Have we forgotten the nobleness of our fathers? or does their blood no longer mingle in that which flows within our veins? Could they step from their graves at this moment, would they not blush to behold a multitude drawn up in array against a single, and

a guiltless man,—a stranger? Lady, thou hast ever known me deal uprightly with thee; thou knowest that my soul despiseth falsehood; I speak not from persuasion, or surmise, but from self-evident conviction, and repeat that thou hast mistaken the innocent for the guilty!”

A murmur of approbation, expressive of a hearty concurrence in the minstrel’s opinion, followed this speech, as Valentine slowly arose from his knees, and stepped back to the side of Sir Richard Gordon.

“ Sir Richard will pardon me,” said Mr. Jenkins, addressing Valentine, “ if I ask a necessary—though it may appear impertinent—question. For what purpose did you meet the baronet in the village? and how did you employ the time which you spent with him? To know this will be essential to Sir Richard’s liberation.”

The minstrel looked round towards the baronet, then, after some hesitation, he replied, “ I have no right to expose the actions of another, nor to give publicity to feelings and sentiments, which are, in themselves, honorable and

sacred: yet, to refuse complying with this request, may draw suspicion upon a guiltless object: I met Sir Richard for the purpose of accompanying him to serenade the daughter of a noble race,—the lady whom he loves,—we were proceeding together towards her dwelling, when accident, for a few moments separated us, and, in the interim, Sir Richard was unfortunately apprehended near the spot where the diabolical attempt had been made on the earl.”

An irrepressible titter ran through the assembly at this explanation, especially as a smile crossed the features of the baronet, whilst a blush mantled on his fine countenance, and his eyes were, for the first time, cast in confusion to the ground.

Mabel and Winny, accompanied by the French Valentine, had entered the hall during the minstrel's speech, therefore, heard his declaration of the circumstances which had conspired to throw the baronet in the way of suspicion. Mabel blushed deeply, she felt for the situation of Sir Richard, and trembled lest

the *exposé* should be extended to herself. Winny had listened to it, as a culprit might to his condemnation at the bar of justice ; her mind was not remarkable for its strength, though her feelings were so for their acuteness, she felt that all her hopes were ended, and that she was consigned to despair,—the agitating events of this evening first discovered to herself what had long been apparent to the earl,—that she *loved* Sir Richard Gordon. Unconscious *who* was the object of *his* attachment, she leant half-fainting upon the arm of Mabel, whilst the page, as the minstrel concluded, forced his way through the crowd, and rushing towards the countess, fell upon his knees at her feet, presented the paper with all the wildness of agitation, then casting one look upon the prisoner, sunk back from observation. The countess gave it into the hands of Mr. Jenkins, who, with an expression of satisfaction on his countenance, read aloud the following :—

“ I sincerely regret that Sir Richard Gordon

should have been molested on my account; I entreat him to receive my apologies. I beheld the faces of the men who attacked me, neither of whom was the baronet, it is also my firm belief that *that* gentleman is incapable of such an act: I repeat that I am exceedingly sorry for the interruption which Sir Richard Gordon has met with.

GWYNNE-ARTHUR."

"The surgeons in attendance, and Mr. Percival, beg to state, that his lordship is, at present, in full possession of his mental faculties."

A death-like silence followed the reading of this little billet: the current of public feeling was turned: the crowd pressed eagerly forward to obtain another glance of the baronet, as though this declaration of his innocence had transformed him into a new creature. The minstrel looked around him with an air of conscious triumph, whilst the countenance of the

baronet retained the same steadiness of expression; there was a faint glow upon it, certainly, but his general tranquillity was uninterrupted, this was the conclusion to which he had looked forward, as a thing of course, therefore it did not create in him that exuberance of pleasure which it might have done in a mind less noble, and a soul less dignified.

The countess was again overpowered by her feelings, the sight of her son's hand-writing, the assurance that he was perfectly collected, and the conviction of the baronet's innocence and injuries, were "in each and in all," a tempest. Sir Richard had not moved a single pace from the spot on which he had stood during the time of his appearance in the situation of a prisoner, and the countess, after having been relieved by a flood of tears, leaning on the arm of Mr. Jenkins, approached him. She blushed—she felt ashamed to encounter his glance,—but offering to him her hand, she said, as she averted her eyes. "Sir Richard, can you forgive this unfortunate circumstance?—can you forget the

insults,—the injury,—can you pardon a mother's anguish—a mother's feelings? An angel, in your situation, would have fared as you have."

Sir Richard answered not, but, taking the proffered hand pressed it silently within his own: his heart was too noble to retain resentment. The countess looked up to him, and a bright, tender conciliating smile met her glance.

"You do forgive us?" she said, audibly.

"*In my very soul, I do!*" was the reply.

A burst of enthusiasm and approbation echoed through the assembly as they beheld this re-union of the friends, and the countess, putting her arm within that of the baronet, moved to leave the hall.

As his accusation had been public, so was his triumph and liberation, and Sir Richard was satisfied. As they passed through the crowd, the spectators fell back on either side, yet still bending eagerly towards Sir Richard Gordon, and "God bless the noble Saison!" was an expression which escaped spontaneously from many a lip.

As the party were leaving the hall, the minstrel became completely hemmed in by the crowd, who formed a circle round him, and, after having stunned him with a thousand questions, listened anxiously and impatiently to his prolonged and conscientious details.

The countess with her guests retired into an inner apartment, and Winny, with Mabel's hand in her's, prepared to follow. At the door of the room the latter stopped, and bade Miss Vaughan adieu. To mingle in the train of the countess,—to mix amongst her guests uninvited, unnoticed,—to force herself into her presence—into the presence of the mother of Gwynne-Arthur,—as well as into that of Sir Richard Gordon, after the recent declaration of Valentine ;—was incompatible with her feelings.

“ Farewell !” she said, “ I am happy to find that the event has terminated so fortunately for the baronet ; I must now return to my home.”

“ But not alone,” exclaimed Winny, “ and unattended, that is impossible. The countess

will be glad to see you, for you have been very kind to the earl,—you *must* come with me, I owe you many obligations for accompanying me on my errand, and I will present you to her.”

Winny’s expressions of gratitude for her attention to the earl, were by no means gratifying to Mabel; to enter the presence of the countess, attended, as she was, by Sir Richard, and other guests, was impossible,—besides, might not Gwynne-Arthur at this moment require her attendance—might he not be in need of something which she could do for him?

“ I thank you,” she replied, “ but you owe me no obligations: my own heart would have prompted me to use every exertion in behalf of Sir Richard Gordon, had no other ever interfered, for he is my friend.”

Unlucky speech! Winny instantaneously relinquished her hand; *she* then was the favored object of Sir Richard’s affection, *she*, perhaps, was the being whom he had been about to serenade, when seized by the emissaries of the

countess, *she* was the same who had attracted her observation in the church; and it was *she* who had so warmly defended the fame of the baronet at the cottage.

Winny's cheek turned paler, she did not now wish her to enter, and merely saying, "Farewell!" Mabel returned the benediction, whilst the former followed the countess, and the latter hastened down an aisle, imagining it would lead to the castle-gate. This passage was nearly dark, a single lamp lit it, at the end perceiving a door, she hastened towards it, passed through, and found herself in a corner of the banquetting-hall, which was now quite deserted, and almost involved in darkness, for the lights were dying in their sockets. Mabel passed hastily across, and had nearly gained the entrance, when a low sob attracted her attention; she looked round, rather alarmed: on the basement of a pillar, beneath the light of a flickering lamp, sat a small and undistinguishable figure; with an apprehensive step she approached, and perceived the French boy who had so gallantly exerted himself for the pre-

servation of Sir Richard Gordon; he was weeping—of course for his master. In a soothing tone Mabel addressed him; the page started, and immediately looked up. Ah! in that moment, faint and trembling as was the flame which illumined it, the piercing eyes of Angela recognised the countenance which she had once beheld in Gwynne-Arthur's writing case,—traced by his hand,—the countenance of her who was his *first* love—the countenance, also, which she had seen *once* before, living, and animated, as it now beamed upon her.

“Do not weep,” said Mabel, wishing to impart comfort, though she felt little herself, “The earl is not in danger, your friend and master will, I trust, ere long, recover: your sorrow is amiable, but it is I hope, also needless.”

The page did not reply, but a deep sigh escaped his agitated bosom.

“Perhaps you wish to see him,” continued Mabel, “I am now going to the cottage and you shall accompany me if you chuse. Come, do

not weep, you have acted well, to-night, bravely ; you have rendered Sir Richard Gordon a real service, and he will reward you."

"Reward *me*?" exclaimed the page, frantically, "*he* never will !"

"Oh, but the baronet is generous: you wrong him if you think otherwise."

"You *know* him to be so?"

"I do, and for that knowledge I respect him."

The boy looked full into her countenance,—so full—so inquisitively,—that Mabel could scarcely sustain the investigation.

"Come, come," she said, "I could not have guessed that you would think so much of reward; you, who have behaved so admirably, who have commanded my gratitude and esteem, seemed to have been actuated by more laudable motives."

"I have never said that I was stimulated by the hope of reward," returned the page, "I do not want money: Lord Gwynne-Arthur allows me more than sufficient."

“That is a good youth,” said Mabel, “now I shall like you again—”

“Keep your liking, lady, for one who will prize it more highly,” answered the boy, with a haughtiness, a steadiness, and, at the same time, a dignity which astonished her. “Keep it until I sue for it.”

“And then,” replied Mabel, surprised, wounded, and angry, but without losing her self-possession, “And then, proud boy, it may not be at your command.”

“Pardon me!” exclaimed the page, catching her gown as she turned from him, “pardon me: the *earl* loves me, and ask your own heart, lady, whether the being whom Gwynne-Arthur loves can wish for more?”

Mabel was still further amazed by the scrutiny which she felt she was undergoing from the eyes and lips of the page, and answered, almost confusedly, “Different hearts have different feelings. But can you direct me to the minstrel? I wish to return home immediately, but am

afraid of going alone, therefore I shall ask him to accompany me."

"He is at hand," said the boy, "I will call him." Angela left the hall, and in a few moments returned with the minstrel. Having become acquainted with her wishes, Valentine prepared to escort her home; she passed her arm through his, and they proceeded to the castle-yard, accompanied by the page.

The day had not yet broken, the stars lingered in the sky, and the keen frosty air blew coldly upon them as they emerged from the gate of the castle.

"What a night!" exclaimed Mabel, "what a dreadful night this has been, and all is not yet over! the earl is in imminent danger, he may die—Oh heaven, he may die before to-morrow's light!"

"And with him will die the hopes, the glory of Gwynne-Arthur!" sighed her aged companion, "but heaven forbid that his life should so soon be terminated; rather let us pray that the steel of the assassin may prove harmless, that the"

innocent may survive, and the guilty be brought to condign punishment. It was the hand of treachery which laid him low, but doubt not that the hand of Omnipotence will raise him from the couch of sickness. Thou hast seen something of the world, my child, little enough, perhaps; yet that little must have been sufficient to teach you that wisdom conducts the universe, and directeth the actions of men. Short and fleeting are the moments of guilty triumph, detection follows, and disgrace finisheth the career; but the innocent have a longer pleasure, and, even in the most trying moments, they have that within which passeth shew. Believe one thing, Mabel Glendower, and thou wilt be happy: *Whatever is, is right.*"

"I do believe it in a great measure, Valentine, but not unlimitedly."

"How far does thy creed extend, fair one?"

"I believe," said Mabel, "that it is greatly in our own power to turn events to a good or bad issue: the man who, relying on the power of an Almighty Providence, can preserve his integrity

unblemished, needs not to dread the final event of things :

“ Who does the best his circumstance allows,
Does well, acts nobly, angels can do no more.”

It is the mean, coward spirit, which bends beneath the pressure of the times ; the yielding mind that turns with the current of his fortune, and steers up, or down, as the channel glides ;—the debased heart, which catches at present convenience and safety, heedless of the future ; these, and such as these, work out of trivial circumstances the catastrophe which was so appalling in contemplation, which they sought to avoid—and which noble, upright conduct might have prevented.”

“ And is this thy belief ?”

“ It is most firmly. It would be unjust to suppose that the great Author of Good, should load his creatures with afflictions for the mere purpose of afflicting them ; the guilty mind may think this, because conscience continually displays the deservedness of the punishment ; but the innocent ought not to do so : in every grief

there is a hidden good, and the individual who seeks that good will never be disappointed. I consider it in some respects greatly in the power of men to hew their own destinies; before every one the path of life is, in some degree, obscure and thorny, but the man who treads prudently, the thorn will never pierce deeply."

"Thou art become a philosopher, Mabel."

"Not by profession," exclaimed Mabel, "but even within my own little sphere of observation, I have had an opportunity of witnessing the commencement, union, and termination, of a long chain of circumstances, in which the catastrophe has ever happened according to the conduct of the object whom they concerned. It is not natural to suppose, when an unhappy being sinks into ruin, disgrace, and destruction, that such had been the path pointed out for him by the Almighty, that his fate had been willed from on high; oh, no, that man, whoever he be, and whatever his situation, had the advantages and the opportunity of becoming something better than a blot upon society: there was a time when he might have been, at the least, a respectable

and unoffending member, but he turned every event which he encountered into a misfortune, and every good quality which he possessed into a reproach. Men of a different mind, under similar circumstances, have, perhaps, risen to grace the country to which they belonged; and the cause of this difference in their fate is, that one followed fortune, whilst the other made fortune follow *him*."

The minstrel smiled. "I should conclude from your present speech," said he, "even if I did not know it to be the case, that these sentiments are the guides of your conduct."

"Indeed they are, Valentine, and I hope ever will be so; I feel their value, and the benefit of entertaining them, for the very possession of the creed, with correspondent actions, will ensure my temporal happiness."

"And thou art happy then, for the purity of thy actions I can testify; but expect not to find similar perfection in others, it is not the attribute of human nature."

"Perfection, Valentine? Alas! I am far from that! Let me try to advance as near to

perfection as I can—let me use every effort to approach it—let me conquer every fault which I can perceive, and I shall yet find sufficient error left within myself to proclaim me allied to human nature.”

“ You were speaking of the ultimate triumph and welfare of innocence,” said the minstrel, “ of that we have just had a striking example—Sir Richard Gordon.”

The page had hitherto accompanied them in silence, but a sigh now burst from his lips.

“ Ah !” exclaimed Mabel, “ how intrepid the baronet stood in the hall ! how nobly he confronted his accusers !”

“ He stood,” said Valentine, “ but as the guiltless should ever stand : offended, but not overwhelmed by the imputation of crime : As St. Paul says, ‘ harrassed but not perplexed ; distressed but not in despair ’.”

“ In trivial events, Valentine, as well as in those of importance, we may always perceive that—

‘ Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,’

whilst

‘ Evil on itself shall back recoil,’

and though it has not yet recoiled, I doubt not that it shortly will. But the baronet’s speedy liberation from his awkward predicament was chiefly owing to the zeal of our young companion, whose name I am unacquainted with.”

“ My name is Valentine,” said the page.

“ I imagined that it was to your exertions we were indebted, my brave young namesake,” observed the minstrel, turning towards Angela, “ and as your own heart must feel a generous satisfaction in the act, it will inform you of the gratitude and admiration which it has created in others.”

“ I wish for neither,” replied Angela, “ this lady offered to conduct me to my master, and for that reason I accompany you ; not to hear commendations of myself.”

They had now reached the cottage-door. Valentine bade Mabel a kind and affectionate

farewell, and departed ; whilst she and the page entered the house.

Miss Glendower immediately repaired to her own apartment, having learnt that the Misses Jones had retired to obtain a little rest, and the page proceeded to the chamber of the earl. As Mabel passed the door where Gwynne-Arthur lay, she stopped for a moment, and leant against the banister—but one thin wall separated them ! The page knocked at the door, and requested admittance ; Mabel embraced this opportunity to enquire after the earl ; she was informed that the symptoms were not quite so favourable as they had been, there was a slight degree of fever. She retired, much agitated, to her own apartment, and sunk on her knees to breathe a fervent prayer for the recovery of Gwynne-Arthur, ere she pressed, for a few short hours, her troubled pillow.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MEETING.

“ I saw thee gaze upon my face,
Yet meet with no confusion there ;
One only feeling couldst thou trace :
The sullen calmness of despair.”

ON quitting the banqueting-hall the countess and her guests entered the drawing-room, some returned to their beds, whilst others preferred beginning the day at day-break, Sir Richard Gordon was amongst the latter number. Lady Gwynne-Arthur renewed her apologies and expressions of regret at the treatment which he had experienced, but the baronet refused to hear more on the subject.

“ It was entirely accidental on your part,”

said he, "and unlucky on mine: had I not placed myself in a suspicious situation, and on suspected ground, it could not have happened. The injury which I sustained from the event of this evening is already repaired, may the evil pass as lightly over the head of the earl!"

"But you know not yet to whom you are indebted for your sudden liberation, Sir Richard," said Mrs. Forrester.

The baronet turned quickly towards her.

"To Lord Gwynne-Arthur's servant, I believe," he replied, with a countenance whose predominant expressions were surprise and expectation.

"Partly," answered Mrs. Forrester, "but it was this young lady who first ventured on the expedition," and taking Winny's hand, she drew her from the corner in which she had stationed herself, and presented her, all blushing, before the baronet. "It is to her you owe your obligations."

With such a forcible appeal made to his gratitude and gallantry, what could Sir Richard

do? The bright hair of the beautiful girl fell over her crimsoned cheeks, and her eyes, which were cast to the ground, glistened with confusion. The baronet bowed—he did more—he took her hand—he pressed it—it was but the impulse of a grateful feeling. “Miss Vaughan, who can do so much,” said he, “can also better imagine my gratitude than I can express it.”

“Well!” thought Winny, “it is something to possess thy gratitude, I will not complain, for the smallest portion of esteem from those we respect is preferable to adoration from an indifferent object.”

The countess now extorted from the baronet a promise that he would not leave the castle until the recovery of the earl; a condition to which he at first objected, because he did not like to be again constrained to become the guest of Gwynne-Arthur; but afterwards granted, lest he should wound the feelings of his noble hostess.

Lady Gwynne-Arthur retired to seek a short respite from fatigue, ere she returned to the cot-

tage where her son lay ; whilst Sir Richard Gordon repaired to the apartment of his invalid attendant, who was still protected by the humanity of the countess.

He found Maurice much better than he had expected, and having thus become again domesticated at the castle, Sir Richard dispatched a letter to the innkeeper at F——, desiring him to send his equipage,—which had hitherto remained in the care of the latter,—to Cwm Gwynne.

I might now disclose a long chain of circumstances, which occasioned the unfortunate apprehension of the baronet in the cwm, and his unexpected presence there, but they are so closely interwoven with other subjects, with which I do not yet chuse to acquaint the reader, that I must beg to defer it until a future, though not a distant period.

At an early hour of the morning, Mabel awoke from a short and troubled sleep, in which the image of Gwynne-Arthur had floated confusedly

in her brain ; he also was her first consideration in her waking moments, she arose and hastily dressed herself, but sighed as she looked out of the window, and perceived that the path which led to the cottage was covered with straw, to prevent the sound of carriage-wheels disturbing the invalid. Whilst she gazed upon the scene below, a carriage approached, it stopped, and four persons alighted from it ; these were the countess, Miss Vaughan, the lady who had assisted Mabel in applying restoratives to the latter, when she had fainted on the preceding evening (Mrs. Forrester), and Sir Richard Gordon. Mabel was exceedingly gratified to see the baronet amongst the guests of the countess, though she by no means wished for his presence in her own dwelling at this peculiar crisis. The ladies and Sir Richard entered the house, therefore Mabel postponed her intention of descending to the parlour, lest she should encounter any of them.

It was not long before Anne made her appearance in Miss Glendower's apartment. " Oh,

"Mabel!" she exclaimed, as she entered, "the earl is so ill! Dr. Lloyd does not expect him to live many hours."

"Is he worse?" was asked, with a voice and countenance full of wild apprehension.

"Oh, yes, very much worse, and it was all occasioned by the exertion which he used in writing that paper for you and Miss Vaughan, last night; I heard Dr. Lloyd tell Mr. Percival so."

"Heaven forbid! Is the countess aware of his danger?"

"I believe it is not their intention to inform her."

"Where is she?"

"In his bed-room, but, alas! he knows her not, he is quite delirious."

Mabel flew from her apartment: to see Gwynne-Arthur once more, ere death should close his eyes for ever, was the feeling which impelled her: she stopped at the door, which stood half open, and looked into the room. The stillness which reigned within, resembled the

silence of the tomb. On the opposite side of the bed knelt the page, the face of the eccentric boy was hidden in the bed clothes, whilst his hand clasped that of his master. Percival was seated rather behind, evidently fatigued by the anxiety and exertion of the preceding night; near the foot of the bed sat the countess, her eyes were intently fixed upon her son, who appeared perfectly unconscious of her presence, the stupor of grief sat heavy upon her, whilst her pale cheek and trembling lip, betrayed the agitation of her heart; no other person was in the room, except the medical attendants and the nurse; the rest of the countess's party having remained below.

This was not a moment for fastidious feeling, Mabel stepped into the apartment, and stood beside the couch of Gwynne-Arthur. What a meeting—after the lapse of years—after the numerous protestations of affection which had been made by the latter—the long chain of events which had occurred during their separation—what a meeting was this! So thought

Mabel, as her eye rested upon the pallid cheek and altered features of the earl. None noticed her entrance, except the invalid himself; he turned towards her with that quickness which sometimes accompanies the absence of intellect, and looked upon her for some time with the vacant gaze of curiosity. She was not recognised, that countenance, which at any other period would have created powerful emotion, was now forgotten; yes, Mabel had lived to see the time when Gwynne-Arthur could look upon her face without acknowledging it. His eyes now turned towards his mother with the same apathy, and in a similar manner he regarded every individual in the room.

“ He does not know me,” sighed the countess, in a low and mournful tone, “ he does not know his mother !”

“ Alas ! nor does he remember *me* !” exclaimed Mabel, overwhelmed by her feelings, and forgetful of the tendency of her expression.

Angela looked up as she uttered these words, and again beheld the countenance of her husband’s

first love : the expression of it was immediately read by the piercing eyes of the Italian. “ And thy heart is still faithful to its idol,” thought Angelina, “ Oh, what on earth can equal the extent of woman’s love? or what is half so torturing?”

Unable to endure this scene of distress, Mabel quitted the apartment, and hastened to relieve her overcharged soul in secret; she descended the stairs, and entering the parlour, to the surprise of all parties, presented herself before Sir Richard Gordon, Mrs. Forrester, and Miss Vaughan, who had assembled there.

“ Ah !” exclaimed Mrs. Forrester, addressing her, “ I was fearful lest I should not see you again, and after your amiable conduct last night, you may guess that I wished to do so. Here is another of your champions Sir Richard,” she continued, leading Mabel towards the baronet, “ this young lady and Miss Vaughan protested aloud that you were innocent, even when the cry was strongest against you: on my word, many

might have envied your situation, with all its inconveniences."

"To Miss Vaughan" said the baronet, "I owe an infinite weight of obligation for espousing the cause of one who is almost a stranger; and to Miss Glendower my gratitude is equal, since she did not allow appearance, and the tide of public opinion, to prejudice her against an old—a *very* old friend." He took Mabel's hand as he spoke, and greeted her with the usual compliments.

With a silent sickening of soul Winny watched their meeting: "He *does* love her," thought she, "and she respects him;—and they will be happy!"

Mrs. Forrester now spoke of the extreme danger of the earl, and Mabel turned anxiously and apprehensively to the theme.

"Ah!" exclaimed that lady, "it is a strange thing, no one can guess how the earl came hither, nor why he was attacked; we were not even aware that he had left the castle, and I do not think the countess knew it either, until the

intelligence was brought that he had been found wounded in the village. Well! she continued, with a half-jesting smile, and addressing the two young ladies. "if the earl should die, you will have a serious charge to answer, for it was you who endangered his life by your exertions in behalf of this gentleman."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Mabel energetically, "that *I* should have endangered the life of Lord Gwynne-Arthur! Rather would I meet my own death this moment, than occasion his!"

The expression was involuntary, the baronet cast one glance towards her, as she uttered it, and by that glance read his own fate—that Gwynne-Arthur was still the adored object of Mabel Glendower's devoted affection.

"I should like to see the earl," said Sir Richard, "if it would not disturb him too much."

"Alas! he is insensible," replied Mabel, "he recognises no one!"

"*You have seen him then?*"

She blushed an assent.

“ I dare say this young lady will conduct you to him,” said Mrs. Forrester, “ and it can be no interruption to the invalid, because he will not be conscious of your presence.”

Mabel proceeded towards the door, and the baronet followed, they ascended the stairs in silence, she entered the apartment of the earl, unnoticed, and Sir Richard advanced one pace within the chamber. Hearing a footstep, the earl drew back the curtain, and his eyes met those of the baronet; for a moment a faint sense of recognition seemed to strike him, for he started and gazed intensely upon the new visitor, but in the next he turned languidly away, and his glance rested upon the page, who was the only one that seemed to possess sufficient power to fix his attention.

The baronet looked round the chamber, upon its silent and woe stricken inmates, then waving his hand to Mabel, in token of farewell, withdrew. There was an eye followed his receding form until even his shadow had disappeared, and the last fall of his footstep had

ceased to echo back to the apartment:—that eye was Angela's: it had encountered Sir Richard's, and partly occasioned his precipitate retreat.

The situation of the earl was so extremely dangerous, that it was deemed unsafe to remove him to the castle for some days, at least until the alarming symptoms should have vanished; and the countess, whom no power could induce to leave his chamber, was of course accommodated with an apartment at the cottage. The room wherein the earl lay was that which was formerly occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Jones, the one adjoining had been appropriated for Mabel, but she now resigned it to the countess, and accepted a share of Anne's bed, instead.

In a short time the baronet, Mrs. Forrester, Percival, and Winny, returned to the castle, leaving Lady Gwynne-Arthur to watch beside the couch of her afflicted son.

And now, perhaps, I ought to relieve the curiosity of the (I hope) *impatient* reader, with regard to the attack made upon the earl. Well

then, gentle reader,—for it is the custom to call you gentle, and I have no right to dispute your claim to the title,—you are acquainted with the principal circumstances which occurred at church on the evening of Christmas day. On returning to the castle, after a reasonable space of time spent in the festivities of the season, the company separated and retired to their apartments. The earl, on entering his, threw open the window and looked out upon the clear, starlight night. His first thought was of Angela: his room seemed cheerless and solitary without her. “I could visit her now,” thought he, “I have not seen her since yesterday evening.” He put on his roquelaure, called Sable, and, stepping out upon the terrace, descended by a private path to the garden, whence he easily made his way to the road.

With the fleetness of a lover Gwynne-Arthur bounded along the mountain-side, whilst his dog leaped on before him, and in a short time arrived at the village; he encountered no one, and hastening towards the habitation of Morgan

Hughes, tapped gently against the window of the room which Angela occupied. "Angela!" he whispered, "Angela, it is I!" The shutter was immediately opened by the hand of his beautiful bride, the sash was thrown up, and he entered the dwelling.

Fearing to prolong his absence from the castle, lest he should be discovered, the earl in a little while prepared to depart. Angelina expressed apprehension at being shut up in a lone cottage, in a small and solitary village, and Gwynne-Arthur, to calm her fears, offered to leave Sable with her during the night. This she at first peremptorily rejected, alleging that he would be exposed to danger in going to the castle at this late hour of the night, without so valuable an appendage.

"There is nothing to be apprehended, Angela," he exclaimed, "the greatest evil that can befall me will be recognition, to which I am more liable with my dog than without him: I insist therefore that he remains with you." He now bade her an affectionate farewell, and

departed, as he had entered, through the window of the cottage.

Gwynne-Arthur sprung lightly over the hard and frozen ground, humming an old ballad as he went, to amuse his solitary steps. On reaching the bottom of the hill, which separated the village from the castle, he heard the indistinct sounds of whispering voices, and shortly afterwards rapid footsteps approached. He turned aside to escape observation, and at the same moment felt his shoulders suddenly seized from behind. The earl sprung back, and, turning upon his assailant, with the strength and fury of a lion, felled him at once to the ground; a second hand grasped Gwynne-Arthur's collar, and, ere he was aware, or had power to set himself on the defensive, flung him prostrate upon the earth. The first ruffian now arose, and with the assistance of his comrade, kept down the earl whilst they rifled his pockets, and tore away his watch, rings, and the glass which hung at his neck. Whilst in this situation, Gwynne-Arthur seized the throat of one of them, which

the other perceived, and being anxious to escape with the booty he had secured, stabbed the earl in the right side with a small poinard, which obliged him to relinquish his hold, and they immediately fled in the direction of the castle.

Faint and exhausted, Gwynne-Arthur lay for some time upon the cold earth, bleeding, and almost senseless; he perceived the route which the miscreants had taken, and being aware that, in his present situation, he could not combat with them, he determined on endeavouring to retrace his steps to the village. With difficulty he arose from the ground, and walked on a few paces; a light glimmered from the window of a cottage, he essayed to approach it. "One effort," thought he, "might bring me to that spot." He exerted that effort, he trod quickly, but ere he could gain the door, sunk down upon the path-way in a state of exhaustion; he fell against a fragment of broken stone, and by that fall his arm was injured. Here, at the threshold of Mabel Glendower's habitation, insensible, and almost expiring, lay the beloved

of her heart, until discovered by Sable, who had escaped from confinement, to follow the steps of his master.

The tenderest part of love or friendship—its most endearing and sacred office,—is, that of watching the couch of the afflicted and beloved object: though every thing may be performed by the hand of kindness, that humanity can suggest, there still remain a thousand little inexpressible attentions which an intense and delicate affection alone can bestow or imagine.

Mabel felt this as she hung over the altered form of the unconscious earl; she almost envied the interest which the page seemed to excite in him, and longed—ardently longed, to press that hand which was still retained within the grasp of the boy. She visited Gwynne-Arthur's apartment ere she retired for the night, bent for a moment, with fondness, over his closed eyelids, then lingered at the door, breathed a short but fervent prayer for his recovery, and slowly departed.

The eyes which close in anxiety and expectation seldom enjoy a long repose, and Mabel had not slept many hours, ere she was wakened by a low moan, proceeding from the apartment of the earl; she sprung from her pillow and listened attentively: it was not repeated, but affection needed not a second signal: she put on her dressing gown, crept to the door of his chamber, gently raised the latch, and looked within. About an hour previous to this period, the earl had sunk into a favorable slumber, and the surgeon, who was really fatigued, had taken advantage of the opportunity to seek a few moments' rest, leaving the nurse to watch beside his patient, and desiring her to call him if any alteration should appear. The nurse was now dozing in her elbow-chair, beside the fire, and Gwynne-Arthur, who had wakened in the interim, had raised himself on his pillow, and was looking around, as though in want of something.

Mabel fancied, by the movement of his lips, that he required some refreshing beverage, and

stepping silently towards the table, brought thence a glass of barley-water, passed her arm under the neck of the invalid, and held the cup to his parched lips. She trembled so violently whilst engaged in this tender employment, that even the earl, delirious as he was, observed it; he laid his fevered hand on her's, as though to keep it still, and looked up silently into her face. The pale light of the candle gave a more death-like hue to Gwynne-Arthur's features than really belonged to them, the fire of his eye, too, was deadened, but still it was the same countenance which had once beamed affectionately upon her,—he was the same being whose destiny must decide her's.

Scalding tears flowed down her cheek, one of them fell upon his hand as she leant over him, and a sigh involuntarily escaped her. “Could he know,” thought she, “that it is *I* who am beside him—that it is *I* who watch his couch, and administer to his comforts,—would he not feel some slight degree of satisfaction in the thought? But no matter! It is better that he

should *not* know it: I will cherish the drooping flower, though it is destined to be planted in the garden of another!"

Her sigh was responded from the opposite side of the bed, she looked up, and there beheld the countess, who had entered the chamber during the time that Mabel was engaged in attending to Gwynne-Arthur, and stood there, unperceived, until the present moment. A loose dressing-gown was thrown around her form, and her countenance appeared as haggard and pale as that of the invalid. She was gazing, with surprise and gratitude, on Mabel, and when the latter looked up, smiled upon her, languidly, but encouragingly; Lady Gwynne-Arthur admired the feeling which prompted this humane attention, but on perceiving her tears was unable to guess their source.

The earl now leant back upon his pillow, and, as the closing of his eye-lids betrayed an inclination to sleep, the ladies quitted his couch. Mabel replaced the glass upon the table, and curtseying to the countess, was about to with-

draw, when her ladyship, taking her hand, detained her, and desiring the nurse to look well to her patient, led Mabel into her own apartment.

“ I have to apologise, Miss Jones,” said she, “ for keeping you from your bed at this hour of the night, but your amiable behaviour under every circumstance, has so much charmed me, that I cannot forbear expressing my gratitude and admiration. I do not know any young lady with whom I have been more pleased, on so short an acquaintance.”

Mabel had nothing to reply to this: she only smiled with a pensive pleasure.

“ We are intruding greatly on your hospitality,” continued the countess, “ and, when your father and mother return, I fear they will be inconvenienced by the want of the rooms which we occupy.”

Mabel’s lip trembled with emotion, and her cheek became colourless. “ I beg your ladyship’s pardon,” she replied, “ for not having informed you before this, that I am not the

daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jones: *I have no parents.*" Tears almost stifled the latter words.

"Not Miss Jones?" exclaimed the countess, "may I ask *who* you are?"

"My name is Glendower.—I am Mabel Glendower."

"Glendower! Oh good heaven!—What was your father's name?"

"Owen Glendower. This is his likeness," said Mabel, taking a small miniature-case from a drawer, and opening it, she displayed the picture before the countess.

Lady Gwynne-Arthur caught but one glance of the miniature, then sunk upon a chair, and hid her face from the enquiring gaze of Mabel.

"Is your ladyship ill?" exclaimed the surprised girl. "Can I do any thing?—Have I occasioned this?—"

"Hush!" cried the countess, "Do not speak—I cannot bear that voice—I must not hear it!—"

Still further amazed, Mabel stood silent and motionless before her. What could have occasioned so much emotion!—had she offended—and how? What could be done to relieve her?—nothing, she was not allowed the privilege of soothing her by words.

In a few moments the countess partly recovered her composure. “I was not aware,” said she, drawing her handkerchief from her face, “that your father had ever married. Is your mother living?”

“Alas!” replied Mabel, “my mother died before my dear father.”

“You bear no personal resemblance to him,” continued the countess, “but your voice is his in every varied intonation. Was your mother like you?”

“I was thought to resemble her,” answered, Mabel, “but this is her picture, and your ladyship can judge for yourself.”

The countess received the miniature and gazed intensely upon it, “and this,” she said, “was the wife of Owen Glendower! She looks like

an angel, Mabel, and unless she was so in reality, she was not worthy of your father."

"She was as amiable" exclaimed Mabel, "as my father could wish or deserve; and, if your ladyship knew him, you must be conscious that he was far above the generality of beings."

"How long have you been deprived of your parents?"

"A little more than two years."

"Where did they reside?"

"Here, in this village."

"Good heaven! In Cwm Gwynne, and I not know it? Impossible!"

"They lived here," said Mabel, "from the period of their marriage until their death: I never knew any other dwelling place, until after that sad event."

The countess arose from her seat. "I know not what may be your circumstances, Mabel Glendower," she exclaimed, "neither am I acquainted with the number or sincerity of your friends; but from this moment I promise to supply, through life, the place of the parents

you have lost. Consider me your mother, you shall be my child, the daughter of my adoption, and, next to Gwynne-Arthur, *you* shall ever claim the dearest interest in my heart. Answer me, daughter of Owen Glendower, do you accept or reject my proffered protection?"

Mabel looked up to the countess with astonishment, and a kind of awe. The tall, majestic form of Lady Gwynne-Arthur, a little bent in the attitude of anxious expectation, the imperative glance of her large blue eye, her pale cheek, now suffused by the crimson glow of excited feeling, her fine light ringlets which had escaped from beneath her cap, and hung disordered over her neck and temples; contrasted with the smaller form of Mabel, who stood beside her, the dark eye cast up in surprise, and beaming with a mild and reverential expression, yet shrinking not from that of the countess; her brown hair, which was uncovered, falling in graceful negligence over her pallid cheek, her youthful figure, and both in similar habiliments—were all displayed by the dim yet steady light of the taper;

with such an effect as gave to them more the appearance of supernatural than of earthly beings.

“*I do* accept and feel grateful for your proffered goodness, lady,” replied Mabel, “for you were the friend of my father, and I shall, on that account, feel more proud of your regard, than of such kindness as my own few merits might recommend me to.”

The countess clasped her to her heart, kissed her, burst into tears, and sobbed upon her shoulder. In a few moments Lady Gwynne-Arthur recovered from this paroxysm, and desiring Mabel to return to her bed, bade her good night in a calm and affectionate manner. Mabel obeyed her, and retired, with surprise and a degree of pleasure, to her pillow.

On the following morning, the first place which Mabel sought, after dressing herself, was the apartment of Gwynne-Arthur. The countess was already there, and seemed glad to perceive her anxiety for the earl; he had slept

a little during the night, but his situation could scarcely be considered more favourable; Had not all Mabel's feelings and faculties been engrossed by the distressing state of Gwynne-Arthur, she would have felt much more surprised, curious, and interested, by the behaviour of the countess; but apprehension for one she doated on, so completely engaged her attention, that, for a while, she could think of nothing else.

After having remained for some time near the couch of the earl, she descended to the parlour; where the first object that particularly attracted her attention was the little work-box, which lay on the table, and suddenly remembering that it contained the chain which Anne had taken from the neck of the earl, on the evening when they had discovered him, wounded, without the cottage,—she opened it, with the intention of restoring the chain to the owner. She was seated with her back to the door, which stood half open, and taking off the cover of the box, drew forth the object of her search. She started

on perceiving that it was composed of hair. "This is a lady's gift," thought she, "but it is black hair, Miss Vaughan's tresses are yellow. Here also is a locket containing a ringlet of the same colour." Her eye now glanced upon the miniature of Angelina,—astonishment!—who could she be? the foreign lady of whom the baronet had warned her some time since. A vivid emotion of pain crossed her countenance, her forehead sunk slowly upon her hand, the picture rested on the table before her, whilst her eyes gazed intensely upon the angelic features; never had she beheld any countenance half so beautiful, yet surely she had somewhere seen that face before? But her mind and feelings were quite bewildered, she could not distinctly remember anything. A tear dropped upon the miniature, an irrepressible—an involuntary tear, she wiped it away with her handkerchief, and sighed; that sigh was re-echoed by some one near, she turned hastily,—Sir Richard Gordon stood behind her chair. He had enquired for her, on entering the cottage, had been directed

to this apartment, and entered without being perceived by the occupant.

Mabel had no power to move: she was overwhelmed by the conviction that the baronet had discovered her feelings. Sir Richard spoke not, but drew a chair and seated himself beside her, still gazing, as intensely as she had done, upon the miniature. A smile of contempt curved round his lip, and a momentary pang shot across his brow, then turning to Miss Glendower, he said, "May I ask what you intend to do with that portrait, and how it came into your possession?"

"Nothing. I have no intention. Miss Jones drew it from the neck of the earl, on the evening when he was found senseless near this cottage, it was then deposited in my work-box, and never afterwards met my sight till this moment."

"And you have now, of course, unravelled the mystery?"

"I am only involved further into it. I am conscious that I have no right to investigate nor to

judge of the actions of the earl, yet human feeling will not always follow the dictates of judgment, and I am puzzled to guess why this miniature should be in his possession, under his present circumstances."

"I do not understand you, Mabel."

"When his lordship recovers, he will, of course, shortly afterwards, be united to Miss Vaughan: why, therefore, should he retain this picture?"

"To Miss Vaughan! Who furnished you with this intelligence?"

"Is it not true?" she exclaimed eagerly, and a faint gleam of pleasure shone in her eye as she spoke, which the baronet observed.

"Into what a maze of error you have been led!" he replied, "I suppose you have been thinking all this time that the earl is engaged to Miss Vaughan?"

"Certainly, I have heard it from every quarter."

"Know then, from me, that it is *false*: such a thing can *never* be, besides, there is no attachment between them. *That*, Mabel, is

the interested object," pointing to the miniature, "that lady is, at present, the idol of his heart."

"And the same whom you once mentioned to me?"

"The *very* same."

"Certainly, I have somewhere seen this face before," said Mabel, bending over the picture to conceal the emotion in her countenance, "but I cannot remember either how, when, or where."

"Oh, Mabel! Mabel!" exclaimed Sir Richard, starting from his seat, and walking across the room, "I never knew you possess so little penetration, you must be absolutely blind! What do you intend to do with the picture?"

"To restore it to Gwynne-Arthur."

"But how?"

"I have not yet decided on the means, but I think I will give it to the page, and desire him to place it in his master's apartments at the castle."

“To the page? Ridiculous! you are jesting, surely?”

“Indeed I am not,” replied Mabel, turning seriously and surprised towards the baronet, who was gazing on her in evident astonishment.

“Give it to the *page*!” he repeated with a smile, “no, Mabel, do not give it to *the page*; deliver it with your own hands to Gwynne-Arthur.”

“Not for worlds!” she exclaimed, “What would he suppose—what inference could he draw from this action, but that I gave it to him—”

“As a reproach,” concluded the baronet.

Mabel turned away in confusion, and Sir Richard continued.

“For once, Mabel, deign to follow my instructions without asking why: restore it personally to the earl.”

“I would follow your advice under any circumstances, I would rely on your word and judgment in any case,—but in this—Oh! it is a thing so much at variance with my feelings!—I can never perform it!—”

“ Mabel, you *must* : your own fate and mine depend on it. If you ever felt for me the esteem which you have professed, grant this one request as a proof of your friendship. Will you promise to place this picture with your own hands in those of Gwynne-Arthur, and on no account allow the page to know that it is in your possession ?”

Sir Richard was aware that much of his own happiness or misery would be decided by this measure, if he could but bribe Mabel to adopt it, for an explanation with Gwynne-Arthur, which he judged would be the consequence, was the crisis which he wished to hasten.

“ I will try,” she said, “ to obey you, at any rate, if I should fail, you shall be made acquainted with any measures I may propose to take.”

‘Screw up your courage to the sticking-place,
And you’ll not fail,’

exclaimed the baronet, with his generous smile.

“ When we meet in after-years Mabel, shall we

not laugh at the recollection of these days? That is, when time shall have worn off the keen edge of feeling, and the memory can retrace, with a pensive pleasure, what once was felicitious or painful.

‘ Hail, Memory, hail! in thy exhaustless mine
From age to age unnumbered treasures shine!
Thought and her shadowy brood thy call obey,
And place and time are subject to thy sway!
Thy pleasures most we feel when most alone:
The only pleasures we can call our own.’ ”

Days passed, and the earl still lay on his couch of sickness, unconscious of the affectionate anxiety of those around him, and without a hope being entertained of his recovery. None were so sedulous in their attentions as the countess and Mabel, both never left his side at the same instant, for the tender care of one could only be equalled by that of the other. It is the peculiar province of woman to soothe the couch of the afflicted, and essay by every fond and gentle effort, to remove those pangs which the unhappy sufferer may endure; it has been

so from the earliest ages of creation, and will ever continue so: the measure of man's comfort was not complete, until woman was given to him, as the sweet solace of his weary moments, the amiable partner of his prosperity, and a ministering angel in his hours of grief. Men may feel deeply—act kindly—nobly—and from the best of motives; but there is a peculiar tenderness in the nature of woman, which instantly conceives and performs all the little minutiae of delicate attention, which speak to the heart, though not visible to the eye, and men feel this, and admire it, though they cannot imitate.

Not the bright sylph-like figures and seraph heads which move gracefully in the ball-room, are half so lovely,—half so love-inspiring—as the tender and devoted being who hovers around the pillow of affliction, allaying every pang that it is in the power of affection to allay, and beaming, like the spirit of peace, upon his broken slumber: especially when on that couch is extended the object in whom all her hopes, fears,

joys, and sorrows, are centred. Then mark the suppressed anxiety of her eye, fearful to alarm, yet incapable of quieting her own apprehensions; the trembling of her active and ready hand, the low tenderness of voice, the sweet but melancholy smile, with which she addresses the object of her care;—mark these: they all proclaim her a woman. Mabel was all this, the page had declined in his attentions at the couch of his master, and Mabel willingly—joyfully supplied his place. She would kneel for hours beside the bed, and watch every turn and movement of his countenance, sometimes she would take his fevered hand in hers, whilst he gazed upon her with the chilling aspect of indifference, until she was forced to turn away and weep in secret.

Not a day passed without a visit from the baronet and Miss Vaughan: they generally remained at the cottage some hours, but only a few moments within the apartment of Gwynne-Arthur; yet, during those moments, Sir Richard had a sufficient opportunity of beholding and

remarking the intense anxiety of Mabel Glendower for the fate of the earl; and for that very anxiety—that tenderness—that devotion—he loved her *more*: so perverse is the heart of man, that, where love is offered to him he regards it not, but the affection which is engaged he always wishes to obtain.

The crisis of the earl's disorder was now approaching: the countess and Mabel quitted his side neither by day nor by night, one of them was always to be found there—if not both.

One afternoon Lady Gwynne-Arthur had retired to seek a few hours' repose, and the attendants had also quitted the apartment, Mabel alone was left to watch beside the earl; he was in a deep slumber, and she knelt down by the bedside to gaze upon her sleeping charge. She looked upon his altered features, his closed eye-lids, and sighed to think that, when those orbs should meet her own, they would not beam with recognition. "At present, I am safe," thought she, "in attending him, but when intellect shall have resumed her station, memory her

sway, and he shall look upon me and remember Mabel Glendower,—Oh! *then* I must resign this tender, this endearing office!—He would think I wished to *buy* the love that once was *given* to me!”

Gwynne-Arthur’s hand lay on the counterpane, she took it within hers, and sighed; memory and anticipation acted too forcibly upon her, she burst into tears, and pressed the emaciated hand to her lips.

An involuntary and half-suppressed exclamation reached her ear, she looked round: at the foot of the bed, his arms folded across his breast and gazing intently upon the pair, stood Sir Richard Gordon, who had but that moment silently entered the chamber, and was commencing an enquiry of Mabel, respecting the earl, when her unexpected action turned his words into an expression of surprize. The compression of his lips, the knitted brow, and the fire of his piercing eyes,—all betrayed the inward anguish of his heart. Mabel glanced once towards him,

then hid her glowing cheek upon the counterpane.

“ Mabel,” he exclaimed confusedly, “ I came not here to watch your actions : I was not even aware, before I entered this apartment, that you were within it; but since what I have beheld convinces me of what I feared to know, I do but ask you to remember your promise and the picture!” He waited for no reply, but immediately left the room.

The mind of Mabel was at this moment in a most distressing tumult ; she heard his receding footstep, but dared not to speak, nor to look after him. She would have given worlds to recall the last few moments, her tears flowed faster, she felt unable to encounter the future observation of the baronet, and longed for the quiet repose of the grave. Whilst engaged in reflecting on this unfortunate event, the countess returned, and the surgeon also entered the apartment; they approached the bed, Mabel arose from her knees, and resigned her place to the anxious parent. The surgeon stood on

one side of the couch, Lady Gwynne-Arthur and Mabel on the other, the countess took the hand of her son, and at the same moment he awoke. His eye was no longer languid and spiritless, there was a gleam of recollection in it,—the bright flash of renewed intellect,—he gazed stedfastly upon the countess, pressed her hand, and whispered, “My mother!”

“My son!” burst from her lips, as she sunk upon his bosom, and watered his cheek with her tears.

The surgeon now beckoned Mabel to lead Lady Gwynne-Arthur from the bed, and the agitated girl, putting her arm within that of the countess, attempted to obey him. Gwynne-Arthur caught a slight glimpse of her features, as she stood rather behind his mother, and bending quickly forward, to obtain a nearer view of her countenance, he exclaimed,

“Who is that, mother? where did you find her? why did you bring her hither? To frown upon me? to kill—to make me miserable? Take her

away, take her away, I cannot bear to look upon her!"

His eye roved frantically and fearfully around, the unexpected and unwished for recognition of one he *had* loved, operated too powerfully on his weakened brain: he had relapsed into insanity.

"My dear Anthony," said the countess, endeavouring to sooth him, and leading Mabel forward at the same time, "she is all kindness, she will not vex you: this is my adopted daughter, and your sister; her name is Mabel,—Mabel Glendower; she has nursed you carefully, and kindly."

"Mabel Glendower!" almost shrieked the earl, "'tis false: *she* died two years ago, my heart lay in her grave for months, and her spirit now comes to reproach me for having ever risen it from the dead—Those features have haunted me night and day!—" He lay back and buried his face in the pillow, whilst Mabel quietly retired from observation. The expressions which had fallen from the earl were not

heeded by those around him : they deemed them but the ravings of his delirium, and, in regard to his apparent familiarity with the name of Mabel, why—it is well known that those labouring under a disorder of the mind, will catch at the first sound which strikes their ear, to harp upon.

It may be expected that the words of the earl would have the power of greatly distressing the feelings of Miss Glendower, but they produced quite a contrary effect! except that she was alarmed and sorry to see him relapse into delirium, she felt pleased to perceive, by the expressions which had escaped him, that her recollection was not accompanied by indifference. During the remainder of the evening Mabel carefully avoided the couch of Lord Gwynne-Arthur, though she remained in the apartment, and heard his voice speaking gently and rationally to the countess and those around him, but did not allow herself to encounter his observation.

On the following morning the delirium entirely ceased, and the symptoms were altogether so

favourable, that, in a short time, his lordship was pronounced completely out of danger.

I will not comment on this, let those who have anxiously hung hours, days, and weeks, over the couch of a sick friend, dreading that every moment will extinguish the yet lingering lamp of life, and suddenly receive a confirmation of their dearest but scarcely-indulged hopes,—let those conceive the feelings of the countess and Mabel:—none other can.

From a long and weary season of pain, sorrow, and darkness, Gwynne-Arthur suddenly awoke to recollection, and to see familiar forms flitting around his bed. The first which he recognised was that of his mother, the next was Angelina, in her boy's habiliments. Well-remembered faces now flocked around him, glowing with friendly zeal; Percival, Mr Jenkins, Miss Vaughan, and several others appeared; he knew and smiled upon them all. But there was a delicate and feminine figure which, at intervals,

his eye followed round the apartment ; sometimes it would stop near his bed, and sigh, and make some low but anxious enquiry of those attending him ; at others it would linger in a distant part of the room, and look earnestly towards his couch ; it always moved gently, carefully, and noiseless, and though ever busied for his comfort, never approached his side. He sometimes also caught an indistinct glance of her countenance,—but sufficient for remembrance :—the being who thus hovered like an angel around his bed of sickness, was Mabel Glendower. When he waked in the morning she was within his chamber, unwearied in her self-adopted task of serving him, and at the latest hour of night she still lingered there, her light footstep sounded beside his bed, and her low gentle voice was heard giving some additional direction, or making some last and tender enquiry.

As his health encreased Mabel's visits became less frequent, at length they totally ceased, and Gwynne-Arthur felt a pang at this privation. Had she neglected him? did she no longer feel

an interest in his welfare? but how could he expect her to do so? had he not neglected her for years? had he not contracted another engagement? returned—yet sought her not? She had behaved angelically during his serious illness, and it would be madness to expect more.

In truth, Mabel could no longer trust herself in the apartment of Gwynne-Arthur; she feared lest some word, look, or action, should discover her feelings, and *that* was a humiliation which she felt unable to endure. She had avoided the sight of Sir Richard Gordon since that unfortunate day when he had discovered her weeping beside Gwynne-Arthur's bed, and now, as the earl was rapidly recovering, earnestly wished for the return of Mr. and Mrs. Jones, in order that she might leave the cwm as soon as possible. One thing pressed heavily, painfully, upon her mind—the promise which she had given to the baronet, to restore the picture, personally, to Gwynne-Arthur: she felt unequal to the task, yet Sir Richard had requested it as a proof of

friendship. One resource alone remained, and that was teeming with danger, yet preferable to any other: she determined to perform her promise in the letter, but not in the spirit:— to place the picture on his neck whilst sleeping

It was usual with the earl to fall into a deep slumber about noon, in which he generally continued for some hours, and during that time the countess often retired to enjoy the amiable society of Miss Glendower. One day, however, her ladyship returned to the castle, and Mabel proceeded with a trembling step to the apartment of Gwynne-Arthur.

The only one in the room, except the invalid, was the nurse, who was busied at a distant table. Mabel silently entered, and looked towards the bed; the earl was sleeping. Advancing to Mrs. Evans, she enquired how he had passed the night, the nurse gave a satisfactory reply, and begged, as a particular favour, that Miss Glendower would remain for five minutes in the apartment, whilst she went below to obtain some article which she required to mix the

poison she was preparing. Mabel assented, and Mrs. Evans quitted the room. She approached the bed-side, not a moment was to be lost, such another opportunity might never present itself, she drew forth the picture and tremblingly bent over the couch. "What if he wake," thought she, "and discover me?" she listened—his free breathings betrayed a deep and gentle slumber. A difficulty presented itself: to touch might waken him, and reclining, as he was, upon his pillow, how could she place the chain around his neck without touching him? At any rate she must venture, and hope for success.

Not the vile Claudius, whilst he poured the 'juice of cursed hebenon,' upon the life-springs of his sleeping brother, the royal Dane,—not the treacherous, the ambitious Macbeth, as he stabbed his slumbering king,—could feel more anxiety—more apprehension of discovery than did Mabel Glendower, as her small hand guided the chain beneath the neck of the earl: and could the king of Denmark have wakened at

the important moment,—could Scotland's sovereign have risen from his bloody couch, to recognise and seize the base assassin, what had been the sensation—the horror created in the bosom of either murderer? If imagination can conceive such an emotion, it surely must be that of agonising annihilation: whatever may be the circumstances which create pain in the human bosom,

“ It can but feel to its extremity ;”

and not the miserable votary of a worthless ambition, had his intended victim risen to detect and oppose him—could have felt more horror-stricken than Mabel felt, as Lord Gwynne-Arthur turned upon his pillow,—whilst her arm still rested beneath his neck, and she was tremblingly fastening the clasp of the chain,—and opened his large blue eyes full upon her countenance!

An exclamation, almost amounting to a scream, burst from her lips: she attempted to

withdraw her hand, and the miniature fell upon the counterpane before him.

“ Mabel Glendower !” he exclaimed, and his hand caught her’s.

They gazed upon each other, pale and statue-like, the eyes alone, distended and darting fire from their long lashes, betrayed existence. His glance turned towards the miniature, and by the same impulse Mabel’s followed it.

“ What is this ?” he cried, “ you then have discovered all ?”

“ My lord, I have discovered nothing,—I know nothing—I wish to know nothing.”

She was retreating.

“ Stay ! he exclaimed, “ you know this—that I have behaved unworthily to you.”

“ I have no claims upon you—I never considered that I had any.”

“ One word ere we part for ever, do you forgive what has passed,—can you pardon what is to come ?”

“ Lord Gwynne-Arthur ! *you* can do nothing

which *I* cannot forgive. Heaven prosper you, farewell!"

She closed the curtain, and fled from the apartment.

Exquisitely painful as this meeting had been, it yet left a soothing reflection in her mind: he had deemed her forgiveness worth obtaining, and had acknowledged the error of his conduct: there was something gratifying to female pride in the recollection of this event, and she felt, at that moment, that she could now endure separation from him with much more firmness than she could have done before.

Sir Richard Gordon seldom visited the cottage; Percival and Mr. Jenkins had been actively engaged with the police-officers, who still remained at Castle Gwynne, in endeavouring to discover the assassins, but no traces of them could yet be found, and as the earl was now rapidly recovering, it was deemed both safe and adviseable to remove him to the castle. On one fine morning, therefore, the carriage arrived

at Dr. Jones's cottage for that purpose. The countess and Lord Gwynne-Arthur bade each of the family a kind and affectionate farewell ; but Mabel was missing from the group.

“ Where is Miss Glendower ?” said her ladyship, “ we must not forget *her*. You can have no idea, Anthony, how anxiously, how patiently, and unremittingly, she attended you whilst you were unconscious of all her kindness.”

Anne at this moment entered with Mabel, whom she had quitted the room to fetch : it was the first time that Mabel and the earl had met, since the circumstance of the picture, and she could scarcely conceal her agitation. Had she been called on to witness any triumph of a rival, any despicable exultation of a faithless lover, Mabel Glendower would have found her pride sufficient to stifle her emotion, and invest her with a perfectly cool and indifferent air ; but *here* no such fence was required : the being before her was one who had just risen from the bed of affliction, weakened in body, and depressed in mind, one whom she had loved, and

who had once loved her,—whom she still loved, spite of herself and circumstances, and who still felt a slight degree of regard for her; no smile of mockery, no air of self-importance, was assumed to taunt her, and obtain a mean and selfish gratification over a deceived and trusting heart: he had humbled himself before her, he had solicited her forgiveness, and she had granted it: pride, therefore, that best support of an injured spirit, was here useless:—she laid it aside.

As she glanced towards Gwynne-Arthur, she thought he had never appeared in so interesting a light as at this moment; she felt that in his present situation she could love him more tenderly than ever: the paleness of his cheek, the pensiveness of his eye, and the unusual langour of his manly, graceful form, seemed to require the soothing balm of warm and delicate affection; with what a pure and rapturous pleasure could she have flown to him, to ease every pang of mind and body, to endeavour to excite a gleam

of cheerfulness on his pallid brow, and lay his weary head upon the bosom of friendship;—but, such things may not be,—the very thought was dangerous.

The countess took Mabel's hand and saluted her kindly.

“I shall bid you a short farewell, my dear young friend,” she said, “for I must see you, ere long, at the castle: I am determined not to miss the pleasure of your amiable society.”

Mabel curtsied, returned a suitable compliment, and her hand passed to the earl: he touched it slightly, did not press it, and the tremulous movement of his lips indicated something like a farewell, but no distinct word escaped him. Mabel did not attempt to speak, she merely curtsied in silence, and then turned away immediately to address some question to Anne.

The Joneses and Mabel followed the earl and countess to their carriage; the two latter entered the vehicle, her ladyship nodded cheerfully, and

the earl kissed his hand to the group ; he did not particularise any one : it was but the courtesy of general politeness ; and the carriage drove away.

CHAPTER XXXI.

PRIVATE THEATRICALS—THE CONFESSION.

“ Though thou hast wrapt me in a cloud
Nought now may e'er dispel;
In silentness my wrongs I'll shroud,
And love—reproach—pain—passion—crowd
Into one word,—*Farewell !*”

As the carriage drove from the door of Doctor Jones's cottage, a post-chaise drew up to it, from which the doctor and his wife alighted. Amid the smiles, congratulations, and sensation, which the arrival of this worthy pair created, the confusion and agitation of Mabel was overwhelmed and unnoticed; never did a happier party assemble round a fire-side on a cold winter evening, than the cheerful little circle

within this cottage. The prolonged visit of Mabel was a source of much satisfaction to the amiable parents, and they now insisted that it should be considerably lengthened, in order that they also might enjoy the pleasure of her society. To this Mabel could not advance any reasonable or ostensible objection, and she was forced, though unwillingly, to comply.

In the mean-time the party at the castle may be worthy of some attention. The health of the earl rapidly improved, and though his feelings had undergone a severe shock by encountering Mabel, he deemed *that* an additional reason why he should speedily disclose his union with Angela, who had now returned to her seclusion in the cottage of Morgan Hughes. It was an act of justice which he owed to both, therefore he determined on seizing the first opportunity for its accomplishment.

The first meeting between his lordship and Sir Richard Gordon, after the return of the former to the castle, was constrained on both sides; but the generous heart of Gwynne Arthur

felt that he had been, though unconsciously, the cause of great inconvenience and injury to the baronet, he therefore threw off his air of coldness, and his overtures of polite intimacy were immediately accepted by the no less generous Gordon. No confidence was exchanged between them, certainly, but their general deportment was now very different from what it had been: in truth, the earl as well as his mother, felt that he could never make sufficient reparation to the baronet for what had unfortunately occurred, and whatever of private pique had existed between the gentlemen, was now dispelled, for each acknowledged the other's intrinsic worth, though neither professed nor felt a friendship.

The countess entreated Sir Richard to prolong his stay with them, she would hear no refusal, the earl from motives of politeness, added his invitation also; and Sir Richard, for his own good reasons, consented.

Although the pursuit after the ruffians, who had attacked Gwynne-Arthur, was unremitting,

no traces of them could yet be discovered, and an incident now occurred which involved them in perplexity, but scarcely threw a light upon the subject.

One morning, when the guests had departed on a short excursion, and none remained in the drawing-room except the countess, Gwynne-Arthur, and Mrs. Forrester, a footman entered, to inform them that one of the villagers wished to speak, on a subject of importance, to the earl.

“What is his name?” asked the countess.

“He would not give his name, please your ladyship.”

“Enquire it, and you may show him up.”

In a few moments the footman, returning, opened the door, and announced *Morgan Hughes*.

The name acted like a thunder-clap upon the ear of Gwynne-Arthur, “What new discovery,” thought he, “is to be made?” But no one appeared; the footman looked back, as though almost doubting that he had brought any one with him,

but the fact was that he, whom he had brought, had lingered by the hinge to recover his fainting spirits against the overwhelming moment of introduction, and gathering up as much courage as a man in his situation may be supposed able to collect, he bolted into the room whilst it lasted. There was the confusion of fright upon his countenance, his hair stuck out wildly, and the top-boots, brown coat, cravat, &c.—all went to prove the identity of his person. A small paper parcel was tucked under his arm, whilst his hat twirled about in his hand, he cast a timid and dazzled glance upon the party, then made his *congées*, which consisted of bows, becks, and scratchings of the head. He seemed anxious to speak, but the words died on his lips; his eye roved from the carpet to the ceiling, but rested on no object until they caught a glimpse of the earl's countenance, when, the urbanity of his disposition overcoming his awe, and unconscious of the rank of him he was addressing, he darted, or rather stalked, forward, held out his hand to

Gwynne-Arthur, and gave him a hearty salutation.

The earl smiled as he returned the compliment.

“Oh! dear, sir,” exclaimed Morgan Hughes, “I be so glad to see you here! I do want to spake a word to the *yarl*, and I hope you wont tak it worse if I shall ax you to do that *liddle* kindness for me: you do understand *gentle-folks’ people*, better *nor* I do, ’cause you be one on’em yourself, you see.”

“What communication have you to make, my friend?”

“Um,—look you, sir,” replied the shopkeeper, taking the parcel from under his arm, and preparing to open it, but finding that his hat encumbered him, he placed it on his head, when suddenly remembering the impropriety of the action, he drew it quickly off again, and flung it under the table. He proceeded in his employment, and displayed to their astonished eyes the watch, rings, &c. of which the earl had been robbed on the evening of his mysterious attack

in the village. Morgan Hughes trembled as he did so, not from any apprehension of the suspicions which this strange circumstance might bring upon himself, but from a consciousness of being in the “castella,” in the presence of “the Latty Gwynne.”

“Good Heaven, Anthony, your own watch!” exclaimed the countess, “How came you by these things, my good man?”

“Um, did n’t I find’em, and please my lattyship, in the bottom of my own garden, between the bushes?”

“And when?”

“*Histerday* morning, and please my lattyship, and all packed up, sam as they be now.”

“How did you know that they belonged to the earl?” demanded the countess.

“I did *oppun* the pack, for see what was inside, and please my lattyship, and I did shew’em to the young man what do *leeve* in the parlour; and did n’t he tell me to bring em to the castella, and give’em to the *yarl*, and please my lattyship?”

Each sentence was accompanied by a tug of his front lock, and a scrape of the foot, his hat, the reader will recollect, not being at hand.

The countess looked at her son in astonishment, who was viewing the articles before him with a dubious and incredulous gaze.

“This is a strange event, my lord,” said Mrs. Forrester, “I certainly should not be contented with taking a *superfluous* view of the case: I would sift the thing to the bottom, if I were your lordship.”

“I do not conceive that more information would be obtained, than what already presents itself,” replied Gwynne-Arthur.

“Have you any idea,” enquired Mrs Forrester, addressing Morgan Hughes, “how these valuables could have been placed upon your territories?”

“Anan, my lattyship?”

“Can you guess,” said the countess, translating Mrs Forrester’s words into a plainer

language. "Can you guess by whom they were placed in your garden?"

"Um, no sure, not I, and please my lattyship: it was easy enough for somebody to throw it over the wall from the road, and it would sure to fall between the bushes. Mah be it have been there this week and fortnight, for what I do know: 'twas find it, by going to dig about the great tree, I did; my lattyship."

"I thank you for your care in bringing it hither," returned the countess, "and you shall be rewarded for it."

The earl drew forth his purse, but Morgan Hughes, laying his hand on the parcel, seemed loth to relinquish it.

"Is there any thing you particularly wish?" asked his lordship.

"No, sir, only the young man in my parlour is tell to me to give it into the *yarl* his own hands, and I'll be much *obleechte'e*, sir, and thank you kindly too, if I shall see you give it to the *yarl* now."

“ This is the earl,” said the countess, coming forward. “ This is Lord Gwynne-Arthur.”

It is said that astonishment in a vulgar mind is always more powerful than in an enlightened one, I cannot decide upon the subject at present, but, certainly, the followers of such creed might have beheld an incontestible proof of their opinion in the appearance of Morgan Hughes at this moment: his eye-balls glared, he knew not where to fix his hands or eyes, and a blush actually forced its way through his rough and darkened visage.

“ Indeed to good,” he at length exclaimed, when his tongue found utterance, “ I be *'sheamed* in my heart to think I have mak shute rude beha viour to my lordship; well! well! Who should think that the *yarl* would come to a poor cottage, and sit down and mak free with a poor man? but I do humbly beg my lordship's pardon, and hope you wont tak it worse, and indeed, indeed, so long as I do leëve, never will I do shute thing again, as ax my lordship to tak chair in my house when he shall come there!”

The party smiled at the these professions of future politeness, and Gwynne-Arthur exclaimed "I hope you will not expel me from your kindness, now that you know my name: I am equally your friend, and I hope you will continue as much mine."

"Oh dear no, my lordship, I hope I do know better: it is not fit for *shute* a poor man as I to be friend to a *yarl*. I do humbly tak my leave now, and beg pardon for '*trude* upon you, good day to my lordship, and my lattyship, I do hope you wont tak it worse, and I will never tak *shute* liberty again so long as I do leeve!"

He scraped his hat from the floor as he spoke, brushed it round with the sleeve of his coat, and retreated backwards to the door of the apartment; nodding, bowing, &c. until he reached the desired haven of safety, when, giving a side-glance to the party, a slight kick of the foot, and a final bend, he darted from observation, ere any one had power to prevent him.

“That man is a rough diamond,” said the earl, as Morgan Hughes quitted the room, “and he must not be forgotten.”

“*Rough* enough I will not dispute,” exclaimed the countess, “but not the less estimable on that account, he knew you Anthony.”

The earl replied in the affirmative, and gave the ladies a ludicrous but not overcharged description of their first rencontre at the inn, in Holborn, and his subsequent visit to the cottage.

On retiring to dress for dinner, the earl anxiously examined the articles which had been returned to him: all things were there, uninjured, except the stranger’s ring,—*that* was missing; many thoughts and wild conjectures agitated his brain as he reflected on this mysterious circumstance, why was *that* detained? why had *that* been singled from the others? Whilst he regretted that he should not have it in his power to restore the ring to the stranger, if ever they should meet, painful doubts and half-formed suspicions entered his bosom, but did not pass his lips.

As the earl was now perfectly convalescent, the festivities at the castle re-commenced: fresh guests arrived, and the stately old mansion might, occasionally, have been taken for a house in Grosvenor-square.

Though crowds of fashion flocked around the countess, Mabel was not forgotten by her ladyship: peculiar feelings drew her towards Mabel: she was the daughter of Owen Glendower, of her first, best, and only love,—of him for whom alone she had felt warm affection; Mabel was amiable and engaging, an orphan, perhaps friendless, and certainly not rich; in protecting her the countess experienced a soothing pleasure: it was a tender tribute paid to the memory of the noble Glendower, and a just reward to the virtues of the living. It very often happens that those who have suffered most by peculiar circumstances, are the least guarded on a future and similar occasion: such was the case with the countess: she saw and acknowledged all the attractions of Mabel Glendower, but as the distinction of rank was so great, and Mabel was

not strikingly beautiful, she did not augur any unpleasant consequences from introducing her to the notice of Gwynne-Arthur: we can generally find a thousand self-satisfying reasons for an action which the heart inclines us to perform.

The countess proposed giving a masqued ball, but as private theatricals were now all the *rage*, and her guests seemed clamorous for them, she submitted her inclination to theirs, and the banquetting hall was accordingly fitted up in the style of a small theatre.

Acting was an amusement for which the earl had never entertained an extreme *penchant*; had he been but a visitor at the castle, he would have decisively refused to play any part, but being the host, and considering that it was a duty incumbent on him to oblige his guests, he, after much entreaty, consented to support the part of Glo'ster in Richard the Third, that tragedy having been fixed on for the opening piece.

Sir Richard Gordon declined sustaining any character, Miss Vaughan promised to appear as

the weak and yielding Lady Anne, Lady Frances took the part of the duchess, and William Percival consented to display his elegant person and powers of elocution as the gallant Richmond. The other parts fell to the lot of indifferent personages.

A few days previous to that destined for the commencement of these performances, the countess called, during a morning ride, at the cottage of Doctor Jones, and invited Miss Glendower to join her elegant circle on the same evening. How gladly would Mabel have caught at any excuse to avoid complying with this proposal, but her ladyship would listen to no objection, and on bidding her farewell, desired Mabel to be in readiness as she should send the carriage for her at an appointed hour. Mabel was vexed at being thus drawn into society with the earl and Sir Richard Gordon: she had wished and intended to avoid both henceforward, and could scarcely summon courage sufficient to bear her through the interview. She felt that it would be an hour of trial, nevertheless she was determined, since

it was inevitable, to call up all her pride and self-possession to her aid. At an early hour the carriage arrived, and Miss Glendower departed.

Three bosoms beat high as her name was announced in the drawing-room of the castle, those were Gwynne-Arthur's, the baronet's, and Miss Vaughan's, and each with a different emotion. The behaviour of the countess towards Mabel was markedly attentive: she always called her by her christian name, as though she disliked mentioning her parental appellation, and on all occasions paid to her that tender preference which can only result from a warm and sincere friendship. With surprise the earl observed the conduct of his mother, whence had it originated; and whither could it tend? Mabel certainly was worthy of all this, yet, in so short a period of time, it was singular that so close an intimacy should be formed.

Few words passed between the earl and Miss Glendower: they mutually avoided conversation; and Mabel blushed as she encountered the gaze

of Sir Richard Gordon, for she remembered the circumstances connected with their last meeting.

Amid the variety of amusements introduced this evening, singing was not forgotten: Miss Vaughan sang with all the sweetness of a luxuriant voice; all the taste and execution of a professor, therefore performed her pleasing task to the admiration of the company. The earl was not exempt from the rule of the night, he was solicited, and consented, to blend his fine voice with the harmonious notes of the baronet and Miss Vaughan, in a glee, the accompaniment of which Mabel was requested to play on the harp. She started from a reverie as the proposal was made to her,—play *for them*!—it was impossible,—she could not command sufficient firmness to do so; she attempted to refuse, but the countess knew that she could touch the harp well, it would be presumptuous affectation to decline the task with which she had complimented her; besides, would not Gwynne-Arthur guess her feelings by a refusal? These thoughts passed

rapidly across her mind, and she arose to approach the instrument.

The earl marked her step as she moved along the room : it was the first time he had seen her well-dressed since his return from the continent, and he thought he had never beheld a greater improvement in any one in so short a space of time : whatever of rusticity had before appeared in her manners or movements, was entirely worn off, and the grace of polished life substituted instead. Her form was now finished, she was not above the middle height, yet she appeared much taller than Angelina, and walked *almost* as well ! He looked round the assembly : many there were more beautiful than Mabel, yet none appeared more graceful, interesting, and lady-like.

Mabel trembled as she commenced her performance : she was playing for Gwynne-Arthur, she was listening to his voice, united with that of Miss Vaughan ; and, notwithstanding the circumstance of the miniature, and the assurances of the baronet that no attachment existed

between them, she yet regarded Winny as a kind of rival.

The glee selected was Shakespeare's beautiful song.

“ Blow, blow! thou wintry wind,”

arranged for three voices. Was there not the tremor of emotion in Gwynne-Arthur's manly tones as he sung these peculiar words, especially the last line? there was—or Mabel fancied it.

When the glee was finished, the gentlemen withdrew a few paces from the instrument, and Mabel unconsciously leant against her harp to gaze upon them. They stood at a little distance in conversation with each other. She thought it a sight well worth seeing to behold those two noble beings standing together; in height there was scarcely any difference between them, perhaps Gwynne-Arthur had the advantage of an inch above the baronet, yet, beheld apart, none would have said that his lordship was the tallest. Owing to his recent illness the earl's

form had become more slender than usual, there was a slight bend too in his shoulders, not habitual, but proceeding from the same cause : his eye had recovered its fire, and his cheek, from the exertion of the evening, wore a faint glow. The baronet's appearance was unaltered : he was stately, grand, and majestic, his aspect might have appeared almost stern, but, as he was speaking, the beam of his eye, and the brilliance of his smile, sufficiently irradiated his countenance.

Mabel endeavoured to learn her own feelings as she looked upon them : both were so admirable, she could not chuse but love either. She could be happy with Sir Richard Gordon, were she *certain* of never again beholding Gwynne-Arthur ; but with Gwynne-Arthur she could be supremely happy, even though every day and hour should throw her into the presence of the baronet. She felt that her affection for Sir Richard was not without a slight degree of passion ; she could not, without a severe pang, see him bestow on another the hand which she had

refused ; yet to behold the *earl* wedded to another would be agonising,—it would be worse than *death* to her !—How could she reconcile these feelings ? was it possible to love two at once ? Had she become acquainted with both at the same period of time, it would have been impossible to make a choice between them ; but the baronet was a recent acquaintance, and many early associations were connected with the image of Gwynne-Arthur : he had been known to her father—even his *name* was that which she had been *taught* to reverence and—he was her *first* love.

She started from her reverie, for she perceived that many eyes were drawn upon her by her pensive attitude, and wishing to dispel conjecture, and hide the confusion of her countenance, she, unexpectedly and unsolicited, struck into one of Mozart's difficult and brilliant compositions. The countess approached her, and smiled : this was more than she had requested, and she felt gratified by what she conceived to be Mabel's efforts to amuse.

The strain was wild and hurried, but not the less well executed; her fingers glided as impetuously over the strings as feeling did over her heart. Several approached to listen to her performance, and admire it, amongst others, Gwynne-Arthur and the baronet appeared; her eyes met those of both; a blush came over her, she thought they had divined her feelings, she ceased, and her head sunk upon the instrument.

The countess asked her why she did not proceed.

“I have forgotten it,” was the reply.

Lady Gwynne-Arthur took her hand, and led her to the piano-forte. “You must now sing,” said she, “I have not yet heard you attempt to do so.”

Mabel begged to be excused, but her request was not complied with, and a M.S. song was set before her, which, in her leisure moments, had been written and composed by the countess. The music was wildly plaintive, but well adapted to the words.

The countess seated herself beside the instrument, Sir Richard Gordon sat near the end of the piano, his eyes fixed on the young performer; and Mabel also perceived the shade of some one standing behind her chair; she did not look round; but a neighbouring glass informed her that he who stood there was no other than the Lord Gwynne-Arthur.

“This is the decisive moment,” thought Mabel, as she arranged the music before her, “the moment of trial; I must now redeem my sinking credit, or lose it for ever!”

She played a short prelude, and then commenced the following stanzas, which she read once over, before she sung them, yet did not shrink from her purpose, though she knew that it required all the calmness and self-possession which it was possible to command.

There's a pleasure in thinking on days gone by,
Though the thought alone be left to cheer us ;
There's a pleasure in heaving the pensive sigh
To shades that once were beloved and near us ;
'Tis a pleasure to know that, whilst life shall last,
Nought from the bosom this charm can sever :
To live in the *sunshine* of scenes long past,
Though we feel that the *sun* has set for ever.

I have witnessed the calm of long summer eves,
When winds in their caverns seemed reposing,
Whilst a soft air stirred through the fallen leaves,
And the bells of the flowers were gently closing ;
I have lingered to view, in that silent hour,
Which fills the soul with a pleasing sadness,
The sun's last rays on some hill or tower,
Like the soothing shade of departed gladness ;

And, though the orb had long sunk from the sky,
It's radiance lingered there, warm and beaming ;
'It shines on another world,' thought I,
'On another sphere its light is gleaming :'
Thus—thus, though thy face thou hast turned from
me,
And thy smile in another circle shineth,
A bright recollection remains of thee,
The sacred flame which my heart enshrineth.

Speed on thy bright course ! I have known the time
When love lay in ev'ry glance you gave me,
And now, though that bliss is no longer mine,
Of the sweet reflection you cannot bereave me ;

I'll not bid thee farewell, 'tis a mournful sound,
And though we may meet again—ah! never,
To know we *have* loved flings a sunshine around
Whose light shall illumine my soul for ever!

Gwynne-Arthur once moved away whilst she was singing, then returned, he knew not how to retain his post, nor how to quit it; the words of the song came *home* to him; and Mabel was so calm, so unmoved during her performance:—had she really ceased to feel any kind of regard for him? Did she only wish to inflict pain in his bosom? Sir Richard Gordon and Mabel were evidently on very intimate terms,—perhaps acknowledged lovers,—no, he could not—would not think so, and yet, what claim had he *now* on her heart? what claim *ought* he to have on it? none: he had voluntarily relinquished her, therefore it was dangerous to continue in her society.

Mabel's voice was not half so fine as Angelina's but there was something more pleasing in it: it was neither powerful, brilliant, nor highly-cultivated, yet it was a sound—

“So sweet, that memory can never lose it.”

The earl turned from the instrument without a single comment on her performance, and Mabel felt grateful for his silence : a word—a look from Gwynne-Arthur would have been sufficient to discompose her, Sir Richard Gordon also spoke not : he knew her feelings, but his thoughts were hushed within his own bosom.

The countess, and some others who were near, paid her the usual compliments, and her ladyship proceeded to inform Mabel of their intended amusements, soliciting her to take a share in them. Miss Glendower replied that she would be very happy to witness them, but declined sustaining any character.

“ We intend to commence our theatrical campaign,” said Miss Vaughan, laughing, “ with Richard the Third, in which I personate Lady Anne. Our second play will be Sheridan’s comedy of *The Rivals*, but we want a *Lydia Languish*, and should be very happy if you would accept the part.”

“ Here are many ladies,” replied Mabel,

looking around the room, "who can play and look the character much better than *I* can."

"Lady Frances Gwyer would do so, but she has engaged to play Mrs. Malaprop."

"But if I find a Mrs. Malaprop for you?"

"Then Lady Frances will play Lydia, but whom do you propose? you would not think of taking the character upon yourself?"

"Oh no," said Mabel, shrinking from the idea, "but I know a young lady who, I think, will play it well, if she will consent to do so: the youngest Miss Jones."

"Oh! the dear, little, merry creature!" exclaimed Mrs. Forrester, "absolutely she is just the thing: she has such a comic face, and such a serious air: she will play it to admiration."

"Who will play Julia?" asked Miss Glendower, of Winny Vaughan.

"*I* shall."

"And Faulkland?"

"Lord Gwynne-Arthur."

Mabel turned away, and made no more enquiries.

“ We had intended to finish with ‘The two Gentlemen of Verona,’” continued Winny, “ but no lady will take the character of Julia in it, therefore we fear that we must decline that piece, though the characters were all arranged, and I was to have played Sylvia, and Mr. Percival, Valentine.”

“ I am sorry that you must be disappointed, Miss Vaughan,” said the earl, taking his seat beside her, “ I wish I could play two parts at once: I would then enact Julia and Protheus at the same time.”

“ I wish you could prevail on Miss Glendower to play Julia,” said Winny, turning towards him.

A deep blush crimsoned the cheek of Gwynne-Arthur at this appeal.

“ I possess no influence over Miss Glendower,” he replied, “ neither do I conceive that my wishes have power to regulate her actions: it would be useless, therefore, and presumptuous in me, to urge her against her inclination.”

Mabel was piqued by this assumed indifference, and answered hastily, "I must decline playing, Miss Vaughan, for I neither admire nor understand *acting*."

"Then you never step out of your own character on any occasion?" observed Winny, archly.

"I hope I do not."

"But that," said Gwynne-Arthur, in a voice only loud enough to be heard by the two young ladies, "is so perfectly amiable, that, to *shine*, Miss Glendower needs *not* to step out of it."

Mabel raised a proud glance to Gwynne-Arthur as he spoke, for she fancied that this speech was but the mere effect of cruel badinage; she was mistaken, his aspect was serious almost to melancholy, his eye met her's full of respectful tenderness, and her own turned suddenly away,

"Oh, I have found it out," exclaimed Winny, "I have found out one who will play Julia; he is a handsome, clever, good-natured boy, and will do it to perfection!"

“ On whom has your choice descended, fair lady ? ” asked Percival, approaching them.

“ On Lord Gwynne-Arthur’s page,” returned Winny.

“ Well selected,” observed Sir Richard Gordon, who stood near to them, “ he will play the part better than any other can.”

“ If Lord Gwynne-Arthur will permit him ? ” said Miss Vaughan, looking towards the earl, as though fearing that his refusal would again set aside her favourite piece.

“ Yes ; ” replied his lordship, suddenly awaking from a reverie, with a high glow upon his cheek, and additional fire in his eye, “ the boy shall play the part ; I will instruct him in it for that purpose.”

“ Thank you ! thank you ! ” exclaimed Miss Vaughan, “ that is extremely kind. I will furnish him with a dress for the first scene, and whatever also he may require for the character.”

“ It shall be so ! ” thought Gwynne-Arthur, hastily quitting the groupe, “ unpleasant feelings

crowd upon me, it is time to dispel them: Angela shall play the part of Julia, attract my mother's admiration, and I will seize the favorable opportunity to present her as my wife."

On her return to the cottage, Mabel informed Anne Jones of the honor which was intended her, and having obtained the consent of her parents to oblige the countess, by performing the character of Mrs. Malaprop, the little girl commenced learning a part, which she was qualified by nature to enact well.

The period destined for the theatrical representations soon arrived, Mabel, with all the Jones family, obeyed the countess's invitation, and repaired to the castle. The banquetting hall had completely changed its appearance. The audience consisted of that portion of the guests who did not play, and the peasantry.

Richard whispered to Richmond, ere the former made his debüt upon the stage, "Remember, Percival, the last theatre we visited,

Heaven grant that none of our guests may fare to-night as ill as we did there !”

“ Amen to that prayer !” exclaimed Percival, “ ‘ I warrant, an I should live a thousand years, I never should forget it ! ’ ”

The actors and audience seemed mutually pleased: every thing was done well, and every person was satisfied—except one—no, *she* was not satisfied—Mabel Glendower. Had she been allowed to chuse for herself, she would, by no means, have witnessed the performance of Gwynne-Arthur, but, by a concatenation of inevitable circumstances, drawn into his society, how could she avoid him, without betraying the reason why she did so ?

Whilst she was deeply engaged in attending to the first scene between Richard and Lady Anne, Sir Richard Gordon seated himself beside her: much as she esteemed the baronet, any other companion would, at this moment, have been far more acceptable; but he made no remark which could pain her, yet even his silence wounded, for she felt that it proceeded—not from

ignorance of her feelings, but from compassion towards them. When the curtain rose, displaying Richard on his throne, Mabel turned her eyes from the stage, and did not trust herself to look again upon the performance, until a round of applause announced the entrance of the gallant, graceful Richmond : then she could view the actor with pleasure, for, though she admired, she did not *love* him. The curtain dropped, leaving Richard conquered upon the ground, and the new king, young in years and royalty, standing, like Mercury just descended from the court of Mars, beside him.

When the company met in the drawing-room, many encomiums were passed upon the performance: here were no critics to dispraise or condemn, the end for which they played was obtained—amusement. At an early hour Miss Glendower departed, promising to join the circle again on the next evening of performing. Mabel left one happy heart behind her—not the earl's, nor the baronet's, nor Percival's,—but Miss Vaughan's: Sir Richard Gordon had this

night honored her with a more than usual share of his attention, he had seemed to feel pleased with her society, and interested in her sentiments, had complimented her on her performance—no, I will not say complimented, he never complimented, in the general acceptation of the term—but he had bestowed on her judicious, and pleasing, yet partial praise;—and she was happy.

Winny was completely the child of nature: romantic, warm-hearted, and enthusiastic, of the world she knew nothing: she regarded human nature as a fair and well trimmed garden, where fruit and flowers grow in abundance, but weeds and noxious reptiles never; herself was the sweetest flower in the parterre, and she looked up to Sir Richard Gordon, as the humble violet may be supposed to look up to the tall elm or lofty oak above it; as a thing of superior creation, which we may admire, and from which we may receive benefit, but dare not aspire to beyond the given limits.

She was the beautiful personification of a

poet's dream—so gentle—so lovely—so worthy
of the being she doated on—and so pure.

“ ’Twas not her beauty, though surpassing fair,^d
Bestowed such magic on her look and air ;
Serene, attractive, chastened, and composed,
That some new grace at every turn disclosed,
That o’er her features’ glow seraphic stole :—
’Twas heavenly goodness breathing from the soul.”

The above lines are from the pen of a sweet young Irish poetess of the present day ; and the following verses, by the same fair author, in which she so radiantly portrays the loveliness of her heroine, are so well suited to my Winny, and, above all, so beautiful, that I scarcely need apologise to the reader for the liberty I take in thus digressing.

“ The heart’s pure whiteness, free from stain or guile,
Was sweetly painted in her dimpled smile ;
Away e’en sorrow by that smile was driven,
For so smile cherubs, when they smile in heaven.
As sunbeams fall, in full meridian glow,
O’er lilies chaste, or newly-drifted snow,
So wav’d her ringlets, in one mass of gold,
Wreathing a brow of beauty’s finest mould.
Her voice had power to captivate, subdue,—
Imparting rapture, and yet sadness too ;

The softer feelings of the heart it woke,
So full of pathos when she sung or spoke !—

* * * * *

When sweetly musing, wrapped in pensive thought,
A tranquil image, to the mind, she brought,
Of blushing evening's undisturbed repose,
When all is still, and not one zephyr blows ;
But, when she spoke, thought, from her azure eye
Beamed, like the splendour of an eastern sky,
The cloudless brightness of the mind's expanse,
Gave flash of glory to her lifted glance !—”

I must go no further—I have already overdrawn the resemblance ; admiration of the poetry, I perceive, has carried me beyond the truth of comparison ; my Winny could not lay claim to all this, but although not quite an Adeline, I yet have sufficient vanity to think that she is interesting and amiable, and to hope that my readers will feel perfectly satisfied with the few merits she possesses.

Passion, esteem, and veneration, mingled in the sentiment which she felt for Sir Richard Gordon, he was her hope—her all—her star of good or evil destiny—and yet she knew not this—knew not the extent of her own affection for

him,—but wondered that she should feel uneasy at the suspicion of his loving another.

Her feelings had hitherto slept, she knew not—none knew—the energies which she possessed: nursed in indulgence, and unacquainted with a single sorrow, Winny had appeared gentle, tame, and unresisting; but the passion which now glowed in her bosom, was of a kind to rouse every latent emotion of her soul, and fan into a blaze the spirit which seemed scarcely to linger within her.

The new Mrs. Malaprop was several times rehearsed in private, before the countess, Lady Frances, and Miss Vaughan, until the little lady had become perfect in the character; and the night of performance was accordingly appointed. The little theatre was brilliantly lighted, the play commenced, and, to the astonishment of those who were not in the secret of the cast, the stately baronet appeared, voluntarily, as Bob Acres. The ludicrous sobriety which he infused into the character was such as might have made even *Liston* smile, and the scene of the duel was

admirable ; Percival, as Captain Absolute, was all that could be expected in a gentleman who did not profess acting ; and, to use a technical phrase, the earl and Winny walked through the part of lovers very agreeably. The little Mrs. Malaprop was crowned with applause and commendation, even by Mrs. Forrester herself, who did not perceive the satire which the character conveyed.

It would be tedious to prolong descriptions which cannot interest the reader, suffice it to say that a few evenings after the performance of "The Rivals," was enacted the concluding piece, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona;" and Mabel, with the Misses Jones and the Doctor, accordingly proceeded to the castle.

As Sir Richard Gordon led Miss Glendower from the drawing-room to the theatre, she exclaimed " I wish you had consented to play to night : if you were a public actor the audience would not allow you to remain idle, after having contributed so much towards their amusement

on a preceding evening—why do you not take a part?”

“ I have good reasons for it: nothing should induce me to play to night, not even your entreaties, Mabel. This will be a night of trial to many, have you courage to witness what may come? If you have not, return immediately to your own habitation.”

“ Ah! what is to come? what have I to fear?”

“ *You* have nothing to fear, but *yourself*: can you repress emotion, and stifle feeling; can you teach your features to wear the aspect of indifference—of gaiety—whilst your heart is torn by the most agonising emotions? If you can do this, remain here.”

“ If you are acquainted with any event which is to take place,” said Mabel, in alarm and apprehension, “ you can also judge whether I can encounter it: if I cannot do so, in pity let me not witness it!”

“ I do not think, Mabel, that the propriety and good sense which have hitherto directed your

conduct under very trying circumstances, will forsake you even here."

They were now in the hall, further conversation could not pass,—Mabel took a chair near the countess, and the baronet seated himself beside her, The curtain rose amid applause, discovering Valentine and Protheus upon the stage. The scenes went off well, until the fair Julia made her appearance, when every eye was turned in astonishment upon the *debutante*. It could not be a *boy* who played the part,—no—it was a woman, a lovely, graceful, angelic *woman*: every tone, every movement proclaimed it; and whence came she? The lip and cheek of the countess turned pale, she leant towards Sir Richard Gordon, and asked.

"Is it Gwynne-Arthur's page, who plays Julia?"

The baronet replied in the affirmative.

"How wonderfully well he plays it," observed her ladyship.

"He does every thing well, as far as the merit of *acting* goes," was the reply.

The countess again fixed her eyes upon the stage.

Mabel Glendower's were also rivetted there : it was not a *boy* she looked upon, but a beautiful—a *real* woman ; a woman moved, a woman spoke, a woman smiled, and (but Mabel knew not *that*) a woman *acted*. In the fictitious Julia, she recognised the features—the countenance of the miniature, and the voice of the page : the mystery was solved ; the being before her was either Gwynne-Arthur's wife, or his mistress : for her own comfort—for his credit and honor, she hoped the former : she could better endure the pangs of disappointed—of neglected affection, than the humiliation of knowing that she had ever given her heart to one who was not worthy of an honourable passion.

In the following scenes, though Angela appeared in her usual attire, that of a page, the impression was not to be effaced : it was rather strengthened than otherwise, every one was astonished, and every one seemed in fearful expectation of some mighty consequence ; but

none knew what the countess thought or felt : with her face nearly concealed by her handkerchief, and her gaze fixed upon the performance, she sat, pale and motionless, until the curtain dropped.

The Protheus of the evening appeared all agitation: his words were confused, his utterance impeded, he forgot his part, and there was a hectic glow upon his cheek whilst he exerted himself, which afterwards faded into a deadly paleness. On receiving the hand of Julia in the last scene, he actually could not utter a single syllable, but stood speechless before the audience.

Happily for Mabel, no attention was directed towards her, or she would have found herself incapable of concealing her emotion; the baronet cast one glance upon her, which she returned with increased expression—the glance of enquiry. A few moments before the conclusion of the piece, a letter was handed to Mabel, which, she was informed, had been brought to the

castle by Yanto, Dr. Jones's servant, and required her immediate attention; it had arrived from the post office at F—, by the village letter-carrier, during her absence; and bore the London post mark. She perceived by the date on the outside, that it had been delayed more than a week after it had been written, and she hastily tore it open.

It ran thus :

“ My dear Miss Glendower,

“ I hope you will pardon me for not entering into the particulars of the melancholy intelligence which I have to communicate, but it really is so painful and intricate that I should trespass on your time and feelings by doing so. At present I can only say that Sir Jacob died suddenly, three days ago; poor Lady Williams has been much indisposed ever since the sad event, and begs you will endeavour to make it convenient to return immediately to town, as she very much wishes for the consolation of your

society at this trying moment. Hoping that you will not delay your return to us,

I remain,

Dear Miss Glendower,

Your obedient and faithful servant,

Hannah Miller."

Surprise, alarm, and sympathy for another's sorrow, acted as a key to her pent-up feelings: she burst into tears: not from regret of the deceased: she could not assign any definite cause for them, her heart was overwhelmed by a conflict of emotion, and to weep was to relieve it. None noticed her sudden grief, except the baronet: he took her hand within his own, and whisperingly enquired the cause; she presented to him the letter,—which he read and returned to her.

It was at this moment that the performance concluded, and the guests arose to leave the hall. The countess was amongst the first to do so: she appeared ill and unhappy. Mabel sprung towards

her, and mentioned that she must bid her farewell.

“Farewell?” exclaimed the countess, “why bid me farewell, Mabel Glendower? Are you tired of my friendship?”

“Tired of it?” repeated Mabel, in surprise. “Were I to consult my own inclinations only, I should stay with you for ever; but duty points another way. If your ladyship will do me the favour to peruse this letter, its contents will inform you that I am under the necessity of quitting the cwm immediately.”

“Come to my dressing-room,” said Lady Gwynne-Arthur, “I will speak to you there.”

The countess hurried from the hall, and Mabel followed in silence.

“And now,” demanded her ladyship, as she entered the apartment, “what is the great necessity which impels you to quit us?”

Mabel gave the letter, the countess read it, then placed it on the table, but made no obser-

vation: she seemed perplexed, agitated, and struggling with a painful feeling.

“ Lady Williams has been very kind to me,” Mabel at length ventured to say, “ she has protected me since the death of my parents; therefore it is my duty to obey her, and, as that letter has been delayed since the writing, she must be astonished even now—perhaps offended—by my prolonged absence.”

“ When do you wish to depart ?”

“ To-morrow.”

“ Oh, Mabel! Mabel!” exclaimed Lady Gwynne-Arthur, “ I could have spared you at any time but this :—something dreadful hangs upon this house ;—something dreadful will occur to-night.—I feel it in my brain ;—my bosom—every where ;—Do not go! If I require your attendance, have I not as much right to command it as Lady Williams? Have I no authority—no influence—over the daughter of Owen Glendower? your father would not have disputed my wishes.”

“ But Lady Williams is at this moment in affliction,” returned Mabel, “ were your ladyship in similarly-distressing circumstances, I should hasten as willingly to your side as I now do to her’s; and she, pardon me, countess, for the expression, I mean not to offend,—she was the guardian selected by my father : parental authority did not dictate any other.”

The countess sat down, fully answered by these words; for a few moments she was silent, then said mildly, “ Farewell, Mabel Glendower, the call of duty is sacred, so is the feeling which impels you to obey it, farewell, but remember, though all others should neglect and forsake you, there is one in the world who will always be proud to take you to her bosom, and cherish you in its inmost recesses : forget not the name of Gwynne-Arthur, it is the name of a friend.”

“ Forget it!” exclaimed Mabel, “ Oh never ! it has acted too long and forcibly on my memory to be ever forgotten.”

The countess leant a moment upon her

shoulder, kissed her cheek, and then suffered her to depart.

With a light step, and a heavy heart, Mabel proceeded from the countess's dressing-room towards the hall, where she understood Dr. Jones and his daughters were waiting for her. As she advanced along a dimly lighted aisle, the tall figure of a man in a stage-dress was seen approaching; and, imagining it to be Percival, she sought not to avoid him, but quickened her pace in order to arrive speedily at the place of her destination. The person sprung forward to meet her, she was on the point of paying him the usual compliments and passing, when he caught her hand, exclaiming, in a low and anxious tone, "My beloved Angela! Are you ready?"

She looked up into his countenance, it was a glance of mutual recognition: the hand which pressed *her's* was Gwynne-Arthur's, the eye which met *his* was Mabel Glendower's.—They stood for a moment, each like a stagnated torrent, but in the next instant a faint shriek escaped

Mabel, she drew her hand away and rushed down the aisle: the earl looked after her and sighed.

“There is one heart which I have broken!” thought he, “Alas! perhaps the next will be my mother’s!”

A light footstep approached—a gentle voice saluted his ear—Angelina appeared, habited in female costume, and blazing in all the brilliance of refulgent beauty. He took her hand, but spoke not, and led her towards his mother’s dressing-room; he knocked gently at the door, and called “mother, are you alone?”

“Ay, Anthony,” was replied in a tone of wild emotion, “alone in all respects: in my room,—in my heart,—and in the world!”

“Not so,” said the earl, entering with Angelina’s hand clasped in his, “you have children, whose only happiness will be that of contributing to yours. Angelina, it is my mother you behold; mother, this is my *wife*.”

The countess shrieked and fled from them,

Gwynne-Arthur bowed one knee before his parent, but Angelina stood erect: her eyes indeed were cast to the ground, and her head reclined upon her bosom, but she bowed not, nor knelt: there was a fixed haughtiness in her attitude which seemed the mockery of humility. Strange as it may appear, that very haughtiness was the charm which lured back the favour and attention of the countess: the first and chief fear which had assailed her was that her son had contracted marriage with a person of low birth. Oh! if that was the case, could she ever again feel a moment's ease? could she ever again hold up her head in society? death would be preferable to a mean connection. Had she not sacrificed her own feelings—her own hopes of domestic comfort—to aggrandisement? and must *he* draw her down from the eminence which she had attained? Must *he* ruin her prospects, and plunge her lower than the station whence she had risen? Ah, surely, never, never! But when she turned to take one glance of her who had become thus closely connected with her, that

fear was dispelled. Though small, Angelina's form was all that can be imagined of graceful dignity; could that mein belong to inferiority of extraction? Was it plebeian blood which now rose and mantled on her cheek? Was it a low mind which dictated that singularly proud carriage? No, that was impossible; the being before her must have sprung from a race of princes.

Gwynne-Arthur, who well understood his mother's disposition, instantly perceived the effect which the person of Angelina had produced on the mind of the countess, and leading his bride nearer to her, he said, "Mother, you do not shut us from your affection, surely? If I have disobeyed, here is my excuse: I loved, and sought to secure my happiness; receive your child, Angelina, Comtesse de Lairai, and now the wife of your son."

Even joy is a painful emotion when experienced to excess, and the sudden revolution of feeling, from the apprehension of disgrace, to the conviction of acquired honours, was too much for the excited imagination of the countess;

instead of clasping Angelina to her bosom, she sunk a lifeless burden into the extended arms of both. No assistance was called. Angelina and Gwynne-Arthur performed the necessary offices, and in a short time the countess revived. The first object which her eyes sought was the bride of her son, she pressed Gwynne-Arthur to her heart, and wept upon his bosom; she gave her hand to Angela, who now, and not till now, knelt to receive her benediction.

“Anthony,” said the countess, shaking her head, and with a tender smile, “Can I forgive the deception which you have practised upon me? Was not this your page?”

“She was, my mother, and at the same time my most adored wife.”

“Let us proceed to the drawing-room,” said the countess, “and present my new daughter to our friends.”

Lady Gwynne-Arthur was willing to relieve the mutual awkwardness of their situation, and, leading the way, the earl and his bride followed.

“Anthony,” said his mother, as they passed along, “I did not expect this finale to our performances; fiction has ended in reality.”

In the meantime, the company assembled in the drawing-room had spoken of nothing but the page—the disguised woman who had accompanied the earl from the continent. In the midst of their conversation and numerous enquiries, the drawing-room door opened, and the trio appeared. With an emotion of mingled pride and confusion, Gwynne-Arthur presented his beautiful bride to the assembly; he looked round the room, in expectation of meeting one agonised—reproachful countenance, but, happily for both of them, that countenance had disappeared.

The transcendent loveliness of the young countess was such as to inspire every bosom with admiration and secret envy. Lady Gwynne-Arthur felt almost proud of her new daughter as she looked upon her, and perceived that, though of more diminutive stature than any in the room,

she yet seemed to stand above them all. Angelina's easy grace of manner was not at all discomposed by this formidable introduction to an investigating and foreign assembly: under every circumstance she was self-possessed, calm, and dignified.

Whilst the salutations were passing, Sir Richard Gordon was leaning against the low mantle-piece, in conversation with Miss Vaughan; but now the earl and his bride approached; Angela was presented to Winny, and Gwynne-Arthur, turning to Sir Richard, said, "It is almost superfluous to introduce this lady to you, Sir Richard, for you have met before; yet in her new character, as the Countess of Gwynne-Arthur, allow me to present her to you."

The baronet seemed to waken from a reverie: he cast a surprised and enquiring glance upon the pair, then replied, after a pause. "Farewell, Lord Gwynne-Arthur, to-night I leave your roof, when you demand the reason of this appa-

rently inexplicable conduct it shall be disclosed. Adieu, my noble hostess," he continued, addressing the countess, "you, also, may consider yourself justly entitled to an explanation, and when, at a future period, you call upon me for one, it shall not be withheld."

Sir Richard approached to take leave of Miss Vaughan, he took her hand, his words were scarcely higher than a whisper, and as she stood rather apart from the rest, none but herself heard them. A serious smile played on his countenance as he spoke.

"Farewell, sweet Winny," he said. "Though always amiable, I never saw your excellence shine so eminently as it has done to night: I know not whether it is the force of contrast,—but—there is only one in the world like you,—farewell, thou beautiful and innocent flower, be ever what you are at present, envy no one, imitate none—you are better than those around you, farewell!"

The baronet paid a general salutation to the

rest of the assembly, shook hands with Percival and then departed, leaving them in astonishment at his singular conduct.

The earl had hitherto stood speechless with surprise, he darted an angry glance towards the door as the baronet disappeared, but Angela whispered to him with a smile, “ Heed it not, Anthony; feeling will have vent one way or another: what can you say for the jealousy of a disappointed suitor?”

Gwynne-Arthur returned her smile, and, smoothing his brow, entered into a lively conversation with those around him.

“ What! is he gone?” exclaimed the countess, now recovering from the amazement which the sudden exit of the baronet had caused. “ *Really* gone? why does he leave us so abruptly? Follow him, Anthony, entreat him to return.”

“ Sir Richard Gordon is at liberty to consult his own inclinations, mother; I certainly shall do no such thing.”

Whilst this short conversation passed, Winny enjoyed a delicious reverie; the baronet had de-

parted, certainly, but he had left behind him a charm which scarcely his absence could dispel—the conviction of his esteem, his good opinion, and friendship ; not a word that he had uttered was forgotten, she repeated them to herself, and treasured them in her bosom as sacred remembrances. It is easy to distinguish between the expressions of adulation and those of sincerity : the words of compliment are studied, forced, unnatural, and precisely arranged ; when the heart speaks, the lips would fain be repressed, expressions fall involuntarily and unconfidently from them, there is an indecision in the tone, an enthusiasm in the eye, and an agitation in the countenance ; all these she had remarked, and fondly recalled a thousand times to her memory.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE EXPOSURE.

'Tis false as hell !

I'll not believe it, though an angel pledged
 The testimony of heaven. Herself alone
 Shall, by her own confession, shake my faith :
 But if there *be* truth in the damning tale,
 I'll wring it from her lips, though her heart split
 To give it utterance. * * * *

* * * * * * * *

She comes ! She comes ! Oh, heaven !
 Can this sweet flower, which I have worn so fondly
 Upon my bosom, prove a venomous weed,
 To sting the heart that cherished it ?

Henry Neele, Esq.

ON quitting the drawing-room the baronet ordered his carriage, in a short time it was ready, he entered it, and directed the driver to proceed

to Doctor Jones's cottage. A light glimmered from the parlour window, and concluding that the family had not yet retired, he desired his attendant to knock at the door, and announce his name. The servant obeyed him, the baronet was invited to walk in; and, alighting from the carriage, he entered the little parlour, where he found Miss Glendower equipped in a travelling dress, surrounded by trunks, packages, &c. and the Misses Jones assisting her in her employment. She looked pale, agitated, and years older than she had appeared five hours ago; the baronet had also lost his cheerful aspect, and intimating to Mabel that he had a particular communication to make, Lucy and Anne retired to another apartment.

Sir Richard paced the room for some moments after the young ladies had quitted it, without uttering a single syllable; whilst Mabel stood in silent expectation, afraid to enquire the nature of his intelligence, lest the answer should be such as to overwhelm her with misery, and, at intervals, proceeding with her employment, then

stopping, and bending her eyes on vacancy, as though interrupted by some painful feeling.

At length the baronet said, as he viewed the articles around him, "You are packing up: Whither are you going?"

"To London."

"To join Lady Williams?"

"Yes."

"Have you bade the countess farewell?"

"Yes."

"And Gwynne-Arthur?"

"No: I did not consider it necessary to do so."

"You are aware, I suppose, of the nature of the communication which I have to make?"

"I imagine it to be something relative to the earl, but I cannot guess exactly what."

"You witnessed the play? You saw the Julia of the evening?"

"I will not deny what I suspect, what I believe I have discovered: that the boy who accompanied his lordship from abroad, may no longer be considered such."

“ So far you have guessed well ; do you know who and what she is ? ”

“ No : it is the thing I wish to know : not from any personal feeling—for whatever may affect Lord Gwynne-Arthur shall never more interest me ; but from the respect which I entertain for his honour—for the honour of any man with whom I am acquainted.”

“ She is his—*wife*.”

“ Thank God ! ” exclaimed Mabel, and sinking on a chair she burst into tears.

The baronet was surprised by her expression. “ Is it possible you can feel pleasure at this intelligence ? ” he asked.

“ Yes,” she replied, “ for I feared that he had formed a less honourable connection—that he had added profligacy to thoughtlessness.”

“ As far as the earl is individually concerned, I believe that the connection is perfectly honourable, and just. But, ah ! Mabel, could he *know* the woman to whom he has united himself—could he, for an instant, conceive what kind of being he has taken to his bosom, and introduced

beneath the unsullied roof of his mother;—how would he detest himself for the act, though involuntarily and unconsciously performed! She is beautiful—highly beautiful—she ‘looks like the innocent flower, but is the serpent under it!’”

“Who then, and what, is she?” exclaimed Mabel, in increased alarm.

“A common *courtesan*.”

“Oh, good Heaven! is it possible? But Gwynne-Arthur knows not this?”

“*He* knows it not,—none know it,—none could guess it—none would believe it were it told to them; but ere long the world will publicly proclaim it, with the disgrace of the unhappy man who has attached himself to her.”

“Heaven shield him from disgrace! his noble mind could not sustain that!”

“If, as I believe, his mind is truly noble, he will not find it so overpoweringly painful to endure the disgrace brought upon him by the guilt of another, and without his concurrence or knowledge: a guilty conscience alone should make us bow in humiliation to the earth, and

though the evil deeds of those with whom we may be connected, are serious afflictions, they should not teach the pure mind to feel intrinsically degraded. No man can be considered responsible for the actions of another, and he who is condemned because his associates or connections have done wrong, is far less worthy of reproach than those who despise him."

"Ay, but in such a case as this—to be allied to infamy! What mind can support it—however noble? Do you not intend to acquaint the earl with this dreadful fact?"

"What! Tell a man in 'the very height and torrent' of his passion, that the being whom his imagination has dressed forth in every possible perfection, is unworthy of his preference? is a debased, guilty creature—undeserving the love he has cherished for her? what would be the result? the information would be received with indignation and contempt,—and the guilty object obtain a higher triumph than before. No; time must acquaint him with his error, but *I never* will, unless solicited to do so. I loved her *once*,

Mabel, and, criminal as she is, I could not teach my lipsto perform this act of justice, voluntarily. Had she been what Gwynne-Arthur believes her to be, she never had been *his!*”

Mabel was alarmed by the energy of his tone, and the impassioned ardor of his countenance; she made no reply, but waited silently until the baronet’s composure returned.

“ This night,” he continued, after a pause, “ I shall leave Gwynne-Arthur, I have but to bid farewell to one other estimable and venerable being, the minstrel Valentine, and then depart. I shall see you in town, Mabel, with Lady Williams, you may be the first to arrive there but I shall not linger long behind: you are the only attraction which has rivetted me to this spot, and now that you quit it, I feel no inclination to remain here.. But I perceive that I am hindering you from your employment, I have no more to say, the little which I had to communicate I have said. Use the intelligence as your discretion may prompt, and now, my sweet Mabel, farewell!”

“ Farewell!” sighed Mabel, agitatedly, “you

have been so kind—so generous throughout,—I shall never forget it—Accept my fervent prayers for your happiness—farewell !”

Sir Richard Gordon kissed her small hand as he pressed it within his own, then hastily quitted the room, and without uttering an additional word, sprung into his carriage, and directed the postilion to proceed immediately to F——.

It is not at the moment a severe blow is struck, that we feel its agonising influence : the frame and senses are stunned, we experience an overpowering sensation of pain, and are unable to rouse our natural faculties to an investigation of either its cause or remedy : so far our sufferings are light in comparison with those which follow ; it is when the feelings recover their wonted acuteness, the mind its powers of discernment, and we feel and know the real extent of our calamity, it is then anguish is experienced in its most refined degree.

With a vague sensation of pain, Mabel pro-

ceeded in her employment, she was miserable, yet she was calm almost to apathy—

“ It was the calmness of despair, which stole
All consolation from her drooping soul;
And, being reckless of her future fate,
She only felt that she was desolate.”

In a short time her task was completed, not a moment was to be lost in departing, for her mind required this bustle and dispatch; even if Lady Williams had not commanded her instant attendance, she would have found it necessary to leave Cwm Gwynne immediately after the declaration of the earl's marriage. She bade an affectionate adieu to the amiable family of Doctor Jones, mounted the horse which had been prepared for her, and, before day-break, escorted by the doctor and Yanto, departed for F——.

As she passed the castle she turned her eyes from the building, and entered into conversation with Dr. Jones respecting the probable incidents of her journey. At F——. an inside place was obtained for her in the stage-coach to

London, and, with an emotion of regret, bidding farewell to her amiable friend, she departed for the place of her destination.

When the coach had advanced about a dozen miles on the road, it overtook and passed a private travelling carriage. Mabel looked from the window, and perceived by the arms that it was the equipage of Sir Richard Gordon; she also caught a glimpse of the baronet sunk in a pensive attitude in one corner, he did not look up, and she drew away without being perceived.

Whilst Miss Glendower and Sir Richard Gordon are pursuing their way to London, each melancholy, dejected, and smarting beneath the pangs of disappointed affection, we beg leave to return, for a little while, to the party at Castle Gwynne.

When the guests assembled in the drawing-room, after breakfast, Lady Frances Gwyer joined them with a most intelligence-beaming countenance; she said she had a communication to make, and desired them to guess the purport

of it. Winny Vaughan, whose feelings were now of that peculiar tone which cannot endure suspense, lest the intelligence withheld should relate to the object of affection, urged her to disclose it, but Lady Frances laughingly told her she need not be in so much haste, for the news would come, after all, with more speed than welcome.

Several essayed to divine the secret, but, not succeeding, at length her ladyship said, " You remember how much surprised we all were last night, by Sir Richard Gordon's sudden departure ; we could not then guess the cause of it, but now the mystery is revealed : He and Miss Glendower have left the village, altogether."

" Together !" exclaimed Winny, the earl, Angela, Lady Gwynne-Arthur, and Percival, at the same instant.

" I am not certain as to that, but I mean to say, that they have quitted the cwm entirely ; and as they were on very amicable terms, it is not impossible that they have departed on a Gretna Green excursion."

“ They had no cause to do so,” observed the countess seriously, “ no one would have opposed their inclinations: no one has a right to oppose them.”

“ But are you sure it’s true?” asked the earl, with ill-concealed agitation.

“ I believe so, replied Lady Frances, “ I will acquaint you with the means by which I received the information, and you shall judge for yourself. Miss Glendower having lent me the book of “ *The Rivals*,” to learn my part from, I, this morning, dispatched it by a footman to her residence, but he brought back the intelligence, that Miss Glendower had departed, before day-break, for London. My woman also mentioned that the porter had informed her, that Sir Richard, on leaving the castle last night, had ordered his servant to drive to Dr. Jones’s cottage, and that some time afterwards he had observed the equipage return through the cwm, and take the road to F——. From these circumstances conjoined, I conclude that they have departed together.”

A dead silence followed this speech, the only

one who had experienced any kind of pleasure from the communication was Percival :—his rival had gone off his way. I doubt not my fair readers will easily imagine the feelings of Winny Vaughan ; and as to those of the earl, he wondered why Sir Richard Gordon should presume to attach Mabel to himself, and why Mabel should so far forget her former affection for him as to accept the addresses of another. He remembered not the error of his own conduct, and the anguishing disappointment which she must have endured by his breach of faith : he only considered that she had *no right* to love another.

At length, after a long pause, the countess, with a serious voice and aspect, said, “ Conjecture has the power to create substances from mere shadows : Sir Richard Gordon and Miss Glendower have left the cwm, it is true, but not in each other’s company. I was not acquainted with the baronet’s intention, until the moment of his departure, which much surprised me ; but I was well aware that Miss Glendower would quit

us ; Sir Jacob Williams died, suddenly, a few days ago, Lady Williams sent to request her presence, and Mabel is gone—not on a Gretna-green excursion.—but to offer silent and soothing consolation in the house of mourning.”

Winny Vaughan could have knelt at her feet, and worshipped her, for these words, they relieved her heart from such a load of anguish. Gwynne-Arthur’s composure also returned, and one other countenance brightened at the intelligence.

Although Lady Gwynne-Arthur had, on the instant of introduction—in the moment of excitement—so warmly received Angelina into her connection, on a more mature deliberation, the reflection of this circumstance did not contribute greatly to her happiness. It was true she was beautiful, highly accomplished, and, perhaps, in regard to all private considerations, perfectly unexceptionable ; but she was a stranger, a foreigner, years older than Anthony, and one of whom he knew, at the most, but little. How-

ever noble her blood might be, the match was certainly ill arranged, yet Gwynne-Arthur loved her, had just risen from the couch of sickness, which made him appear to his fond mother as though returned to her from the grave—and it was too late to recal the deed, therefore she must reconcile her feelings to it as well as she was able.

For some weeks the festivities at Castle-Gwynne continued, during which the young countess became the attraction, the wonder, the admiration of the whole neighbourhood : but as the London season was now advancing, the earl and countess began to make preparations for their return to the metropolis. A splendid house in Grosvenor square, was engaged for the reception of his lordship and his bride, whilst the dowager countess, though her plans relative to Winny Vaughan had now totally ceased, invited that young lady to spend some time with her at her residence in Park Lane.

Early in the spring the Gwynne-Arthur family repaired to town. Almost the first persons who visited the earl and Angela, when settled in their new establishment, were the Count Manfredini and Zizi. Mutual enquiries and congratulations passed, and the earl, as he looked upon the blooming little girl, could almost fancy that in her large dark eyes he recognised the intelligent orbs of the stranger, whom he had encountered in the cottage, on the night of the snow-storm. The stranger's ring, too, had borne the name of Julia, and *Zizi* was the French abbreviation for that name. These were strange coincidences. Drawing *Zizi* aside, whilst Manfredini and his sister were engaged in conversation, Gwynne-Arthur asked if she remembered her parents; *Zizi* blushed, and trembled violently whilst she replied in the negative.

“What is your name, besides *Zizi*?” he enquired.

“I have no other name,” was her reply, and she flew back to the side of the countess.

As may be expected, the entertainments given by the young earl and countess were most splendid; but what appeared strange to Gwynne-Arthur was, that his rooms were seldom visited by the female part of a family, whilst the gentlemen who came there stared boldly, almost insolently upon the beauty of Angelina. This was not the treatment which he wished and had expected *his* wife to receive, and he determined on seizing the first opportunity to resent it. For some time Gwynne-Arthur was thus perplexed by the unaccountable conduct of the people with whom he associated; he received but few invitations to private parties, which included the name of his wife, and, when they appeared in public, the male part of the company smiled significantly upon him, whilst the ladies shunned their society. Notwithstanding this, his passion for Angela did not diminish, indeed the contempt which she every where experienced only made him love her still more devotedly.

Hitherto the earl had not encountered either

Mabel Glendower or Sir Richard Gordon, and he was happy in having avoided them.

One evening Gwynne-Arthur and Angela joined a small private party given by the dowager Marchioness of C——. Soon as they appeared, a certain noble duke who was in the room, took the hand of his duchess, and bidding the hostess farewell, quitted the assembly. At the same moment the Marquess of L——. passed by with his daughter, and also left the company. Was it possible to bear this insult and not avenge it? Oh good heaven! no man could do so!

Enraged, mortified, and wounded, Gwynne-Arthur sat down on the following morning to pen a challenge to his grace. Whilst thus employed, an acquaintance, who had been amongst the guests on the preceding evening, called on him. The countess had just driven to the park, therefore they were alone.

After a little conversation, Gwynne-Arthur said, “Melville, shall I ask a favour of you?”

“Certainly, if it is in my power to grant it.”

To present this note to the Duke of —— and accompany me, to-morrow, to ——”

“What! A challenge I suppose!”

“Would it were not so, but justice,—honour,—every feeling dear to the heart of man requires it.”

“What do you mean?”

“You witnessed the duke’s conduct, last night,—you saw the palpable insult he offered to me.”

“I cannot condemn the duke for what he did, and had I been in his situation, I, certainly, should have acted in a similar manner: you did wrong, and in your cooler moments you will acknowledge it.”

“Did wrong? May I demand to know in what particular?”

“In bringing De Lairai with you, and introducing her to that party. It was quite enough that she should accompany you from France, but really—to take her into your own immediate habitation—allow her to assume your title,—lead

her into public and private assemblies, and introduce her to your mother,—Oh! Gwynne-Arthur—this was too bad!”

Had Melville been a basilisk, he could not more strongly have rivetted the attention of the earl upon himself, than he did by this short speech. To hear the name of Angela treated thus disrespectfully, whose angelic purity seemed almost too great for human feelings—

“ Too pure even for the purest human ties,”

to hear her thus degraded—abused—insulted—it was too much! He endeavoured to speak, but he felt choked, he could not utter a syllable, his eyes remained fixed in silence upon Melville, who thus continued.

“ On your arrival in London, nothing could exceed my astonishment to find that little De Lairai had been your *compagne du voyage*. I have heard the whole story of the *page*, the *play*, &c and, *entre nous*, you would have done well to keep her still in disguise: you have no idea how the world cries out against you, all

prudent mothers turn up their eyes at your name; you will certainly spoil your match, Gwynne-Arthur, if you go on like this. On my honour, a pretty pass the world has come to, when the youngest of our nobility scruples not to introduce his mistress to all his acquaintances indiscriminately !”

“ Villain !” exclaimed Gwynne-Arthur, when his words found utterance. “ Villain ! will you dare again to pollute the sacred name of De Lairai—of Angela—of my *wife* ?”

“ *Wife* !” repeated Melville, bending on him an intense but horrified glance.

“ Aye, *wife*. Do you *doubt* the word, or do you not understand its meaning ?”

“ Do not jest with me, Gwynne-Arthur, the preservation of your honour depends upon this moment ; is she *really* your *wife* ?”

“ Aye, *really*, and indissolubly.”

“ Oh God ! I *pity* you !” The tone of his voice and the expression of his countenance were so full of sorrow, sympathy, and amazement,

that it was impossible to doubt the truth of his words.

“ *Pity me!* ” shrieked Gwynne-Arthur. “ Kill me—curse me—say that my disgrace is merited—but do not pity me! Disclose it, Melville—disclose it all—I will hear it all,—though it should be sufficient to drive man mad, it shall not madden me! What is this woman—this beautiful—this bewitching demon? ”

“ If you will promise to be calm, I will obey you.”

“ Calm! I am calm—look at me—I do not feel—I am not vexed—begin! ”

Melville resumed his seat, and gave the earl a long history of events, the agonising nature of which, clad in the simple robe of truth, could not be doubted.

“ But come with me to the duke himself,” exclaimed Melville, “ he will confirm all that I have said, and perhaps furnish you with further particulars; the Marquis of L—— can do so; Sir Richard Gordon, Lord Emerson, every one

who has been on the continent will be able to inform you that, in Paris, she was well known as the beautiful little courtesan De-Lairai."

"And in London," added the earl, with a bitter and a dreadful smile, "as the *wife* of the credulous fool Gwynne-Arthur."

"No one believes that she *is* your wife," replied his friend, "for we all had concluded that you were perfectly acquainted with her character, but passed her on your mother for such, and allowed her to take the title, from some imprudent frolic. I wish you would come with me to the duke directly, shall I order your carriage for that purpose?"

The earl nodded assent, Melville rang the bell, and in a few moments afterwards they departed.

The duke was at home and alone. Gwynne-Arthur found himself unable to enter upon the subject, therefore Melville, in a few words, explained the peculiar situation of the earl. In a generous and friendly manner, the duke gave them such information as fully established the

disgrace of the earl, and the infamy of the woman with whom he had unhappily connected himself. He also furnished Gwynne-Arthur with letters, which, he almost blushed to confess, he had received from her, and which breathed throughout a licentious and depraved spirit.

“Will you go further?” asked Melville, “will you go to the Marquis, or Lord Emerson? I can take you to a hundred, who will all tell the same tale.”

“Yes,” he exclaimed, “I will see them all—I will not shrink from the publication of my own dishonour—let me have undeniable proof of her guilt, ere I cast her from me for ever!”

The carriage accordingly repaired to the respective habitations of the marquis and Lord Emerson, both of whom they fortunately found at home, and who corroborated the intelligence which he had in other quarters received. They also produced specimens of her correspondence, which seemed written in a style perfectly in unison with those letters which he had received from the duke.

It was night when the earl arrived at home, when he was informed that the countess had departed for the Opera, under the protection of her brother, the Count Manfredini.

The aspect of Lord Gwynne-Arthur was so wild, and his language so incoherent, that Melville feared to quit him ; he therefore seated himself beside the fire, whilst the earl paced the room in distraction, heaving deep and struggling sighs, and stopping at intervals to look upon the letters which he still held in his hand. He did not speak, he seemed to fear to trust himself with words. After some time spent in this distressing state of mind, a carriage was heard to stop at the door.

“That is Angela!” was the first expression which Gwynne-Arthur uttered since he had entered the house. Melville started up, bade him farewell, and not wishing to become an eye-witness to the scene which was to follow, stepped into an adjoining drawing-room, until the countess had ascended the stairs.

Manfredini had parted from her at the door,

therefore Angelina, alone, repaired to the apartment where the earl waited to receive her. As she entered the room his eye rested on her beautiful form, she seemed so heavenly,—so unconscious of ill,—he could scarcely credit the agonising proofs which he had just received. And did he gaze upon her for the last time with fondness? must he never again esteem—love—adore her? Oh! whatever she might be—however debased—his heart was so closely attached to her that he could never, never, cease to feel affection! The first feeling which agitated his bosom was an overpowering emotion of love; the second was the voice of honour. Oh, he must not think—he must not dwell upon her charms, the crisis was come, and, by it, she must stand or fall.

With her own angelic smile Angelina approached, and glided her arm within that of Gwynne-Arthur. “ My dear Anthony, you are not well to-night,” she said in a soothing tone.

He thought her voice had never sounded so

melodious, he gazed upon her once, but answered not, distraction rushed across his brain, "Angela!" he exclaimed, flinging the letters upon the table, "answer me! answer me! what are those?"

The countess turned quickly towards them, Gwynne-Arthur's eyes were fixed intensely upon her countenance, as she looked over the epistles, individually; she read, or partly read, each, and her cheek turned paler than ever.

Whilst he waited breathless with agonising apprehension, and with the faint hope that she could produce some proof which would fully proclaim her innocence, and contradict the dreadful fact, she turned to him, and, with a smile of bitter contempt, said calmly, "So then, the farce is over, and I can play my part no longer! well! I acted as long as I was allowed to act, and if I cannot continue to do so, it is not for want of inclination or ability. But the mask shall not be *torn* from me, I drop it voluntarily. All this is true, Gwynne-Arthur, I am, indeed, what these letters and your kind friends

declare me to be,—but not the less your *wife!*”

The unabashed effrontery of hardened guilt blazed through her beautiful countenance as she spoke, and *that saved* him: had she wept,—had she evinced the smallest degree of contrition, the slightest spark of affection or shame, he had been lost: he had sacrificed his honour, forgotten her errors, and remembered only that she loved him.

He gazed upon her in silent agony: never had he beheld any thing so horridly beautiful as Angelina appeared at this moment, so capable of inspiring the opposite passions of love and detestation. She shrunk not from his glance, her hand still held the letters, it trembled a little, and her cheek became flushed, but it was with the rage of disappointed hopes,—of detected crime.

“Oh God! Say that it is false, and give me peace!” exclaimed the amazed earl.

“If saying it would serve my purpose, I would do so instantly, and again deceive you,” was the

shameless answer, “but I perceive that the time is gone by when my simple word could fool you into credulity.”

“You will drive me in madness to the grave! By the love you once cherished for me—”

“Love? I *never* loved you. It was your own inordinate vanity which led you to suppose it, and I knew my own interest too well to cross the child in its amusement!”

Contempt, insult, disgrace, cast upon him by the once, he feared, *still* adored Angelina—Oh! he could never bear it. He rushed towards the door.

“Anthony,” she said in a soft voice. He turned as though waking from a dreadful dream, but the same scornful, demoniac countenance met his view. “Remember,” she added in a taunting whisper, “that whatever I may be, I am still the Countess of Castle Gwynne; you cannot deprive me of the only thing I wished for and obtained.”

Could any action or expression more fully betray the baseness, the hardness of her vitiated

heart, and the mean, interested motives of her deceitful conduct? Could any thing more poignantly wound and mortify the generous soul of Gwynne-Arthur? to have been accepted—wedded—for rank and riches, and not for love, as she had pretended was the case! Could any thing more severely, more justly punish him for his desertion of Mabel Glendower? All these feelings crowded upon his mind at the same instant. He flew from the drawing-room, rushed down the stairs, nor knew whither he had hastened until he found himself on the pavement of the square.

It was a fine moonlight night, such a night as those he had spent in happiness with Angelina, the scene encreased his anguish. Reason scarcely retained her station in his brain, he hurried from the spot, walked hastily up Grosvenor-street, and stopped suddenly when he perceived himself at the door of his mother's residence in Park-lane. To acquaint the countess with what had happened was impossible—no—he would not see her—but he would not return to his home, no

longer a home for *him*: he would retire to his former apartment here; but rest was not to be obtained any where.

An elegant equipage stood near the door, he darted through the crowd of lacqueys assembled on the steps, and hastily flew up the stairs. At the same moment a gentleman was descending, the earl glanced towards him, it was Sir Richard Gordon.

Painfully welcome was the sight of the baronet at this moment.

“Sir Richard, if you have humanity, follow me!” exclaimed Gwynne-Arthur, and darting into an adjoining room, the baronet obeyed him. He saw by the countenance of the earl that he was agitated by some dreadful feeling, therefore spoke not, until his composure had in some measure returned.

“You are aware of my disgrace,” Gwynne-Arthur at length said, “you have long been aware of it—I was a fool—I could not take the hint you offered—I deserved public exposure, and I have met with it! Am I not deservingly—cruelly

punished? Angelina!—I can say no more—tell me—for God’s sake,—all you know of this seducing hypocrite!”

Sir Richard was not surprised by this speech; the detection of Angelina was an event which he had long foreseen, and though it required an effort—an amazing effort—to speak of her as she deserved—and a total suppression of feeling,—he yet performed that act of justice which was due to the honour of the earl. The particulars of this communication, as it is connected with other important circumstances, we beg leave to defer until a succeeding chapter.

For some hours the earl and the baronet were closeted together, and when at length they separated, it was with an agitated step, a pale cheek, and a flashing eye, that the baronet descended the stairs, and throwing himself into his chariot, ordered the coachman to drive home.

The pangs of self-reproach are far more agonising than those of any other feeling, and Gwynne-Arthur experienced them in their most

tormenting influence. One thoughtless— inconsiderate action had entailed misery and disgrace on him for ever, and—worse than on himself—on his mother. How could her high mind support this degradation? Allied to shame—to disgrace and infamy! Once the dreadful thought entered his imagination of terminating his own existence, but would not that rather encrease the anguish of his mother, than diminish it? Oh, for this imprudent—this irrevocable act, he owed her a whole life of obedience and affection.—And Mabel Glendower!—he could never meet *her* eyes again, shame and confusion would overpower him. How much had he wronged the baronet, what a friend in him had he neglected! Had he but allowed himself to hold a friendly intercourse with that noble-minded being, the disgrace of public exposure might have been spared him. Angelina had confessed that she loved him not, that she had *never* loved him—could he know this and *live*? Where could he flee for comfort? Would not every countenance—every object—turn reproach upon himself?

From the tortures of a self-upbraiding conscience he could not fly.

He sat down and wrote a hasty note to Melville, to come and acquaint the countess with the dreadful discovery, and dispatched it immediately to the abode of his friend. Melville had just reached home when the summons arrived, but he obeyed the call and hastened to Park-lane.

The countess knew not that Gwynne-Arthur was beneath her roof, he had ordered the domestics not to inform her of it; her guests had departed, and she was quitting the drawing-room for her own apartment, Miss Vaughan having retired a few moments before, when Melville ascended the stairs. She was surprised at the lateness of the visit, and felt apprehensive of unwelcome news, when she perceived the expression of his countenance.

“What is the matter?” she exclaimed, “has any thing happened? where is Anthony?”

“He is safe and well,” replied Melville, “but your ladyship must lend me your attention

for a few moments." He took her hand and led her into the drawing-room, they seated themselves in silence, and, after a pause, Melville, in the gentlest manner that such intelligence could be conveyed in, acquainted the countess with the extent of her misery, and that of her son.

Fainting fits succeeded so rapidly that Colonel Melville, and the attendants whom he had called to her assistance, feared they would be followed by fatal consequences, but at length animation returned, and after a long and vain struggle to repress tears, she burst involuntarily into them. Melville took the opportunity to whisper to her how necessary it was, for the preservation of Gwynne-Arthur's peace and reason, that she should subdue her sorrows, and not let him perceive the weight of the blow which she had received; her active mind caught at the timely suggestion, and being informed that the earl was within her residence, she requested to see him. Her son was dearer to her than even her ambition, and the fear of being deprived of this

treasure of her existence, was the sole but powerful motive which induced her to wear the appearance of a calmness which she did not feel.

The attendants were dismissed, and in a few moments the earl wildly entered the room. He sprung towards his mother, and sunk beside the couch where she was reposing.

“Anthony,” she exclaimed, with that effort of mind which always marked her conduct in emergent cases, “Anthony, do not let feeling overpower you at this trying moment, it is true our situation is an unhappy one, but let us not make it more so : the disgrace of this event is not half so great as you imagine ; we are not the deceivers, but the deceived.”

“And can my mother teach me tranquillity, on whom I have drawn down such a load of infamy?”—

“Hush ! Let us study our mutual happiness : to repine at what cannot be recalled, is useless : let us collect our energies, soothe our ruffled feelings, and endeavour to ascertain the surest and the quickest mode of extricating ourselves

from this misery. Good night, I cannot speak to you longer, but tranquillize your mind for your mother's sake, farewell!"

The countess hastily left the room, for she dreaded lest her assumed composure should vanish if she remained longer in the presence of her afflicted and afflicting son. Here was a trial for the high spirit of the haughty countess: she now found that it was possible to endure a much heavier disgrace than that of a connection with a person of low birth, she was now allied to dishonour, infamy, and guilt. Oh! this was soul-harrowing, this was torturing to the last degree! The night was passed in sleepless anxiety, and the morning dawned without bringing the slightest amelioration of her sorrows.

On the following morning the earl wrote to Mr. Jenkins, informing him of the horrible disclosure which had been made, and requesting his immediate presence in town. In a short time the summons was obeyed. It was an affecting meeting between Mr. Jenkins and the earl, the former made no observation relative to the

late distressing event, until Gwynne-Arthur voluntarily reverted to it. In the course of conversation on this subject, the earl mentioned his wish to obtain a divorce, but this, Mr. Jenkins observed, was an impossibility, unless Angelina should voluntarily consent to such a measure; as the marriage had been strictly and legally performed, according to the custom of the country in which it had been solemnized, and that, since their union, no criminal act of the countess could be proved. It was in their power to dwell apart, but the marriage could not be annulled, until the death of one party, or the consent of both.

“ Oh, good heaven! and must it be so?” exclaimed Gwynne-Arthur, “ Can death alone release me from infamy? Well, death is preferable to my present sufferings,—I feel it all!—I know it all!—she is debased—hardened—profligate, and still she is my *wife*, and still I *love* her!”

Mr. Jenkins shuddered and sighed at these words, but it was not in his power, nor in the

power of any one near him, to soothe the pangs which had occasioned them.

Since the declaration of the real character of the young countess, neither the earl, who still resided with his mother, nor Lady Gwynne-Arthur, had appeared in public; from those who visited them they withdrew not, but they did not *seek* society. Melville, Percival, (who was at present residing with his uncle, Lord Lovell) and Sir Richard Gordon, were amongst their guests. The baronet came often, and held long and private conferences with the earl, with whom he was now on the most intimate and friendly footing; he felt really interested in the situation of Gwynne-Arthur, and did all in his power to alleviate it. Mrs. Forrester, who had prevailed on her "good man" to come to town for a season, was residing in Cavendish-square, and having been in the habit of visiting the earl and Angelina at their house in Grosvenor-square, and receiving them as guests at her own, still called occasionally in the way of a morning visit,

and *her* house was the only one which they frequented, even in a casual manner. This reserve proceeded from no definite feeling: the bustle and exertion of mixed society was irksome to them, under their present circumstances, and as her circle of acquaintances was very limited, there was seldom any probability of meeting guests in her drawing-room.

Angelina, on the contrary, went more than ever into public: she seemed to condemn animadversion, and to court observation. The principal part of her acquaintances shrunk from intimacy with her, some quitted her at once, whilst others relaxed their connection gradually, and in a few weeks Angela found herself despised, ridiculed, and deserted, by that society of which she had been, a short period before, the model and the admiration.

The friends and relations of the earl were now endeavouring to negotiate with her for a divorce, but she would listen to no proposal of the kind; she at once and decisively refused, she said that she never wished to behold him more, because

she loved him not, but she was his *wife*, would not relinquish that title, and determined to enjoy its privileges. The house in Grosvenor-square she still retained as her residence, and Zizi was now taken into her establishment.

From these circumstances it was, perhaps, as much the fear of encountering Angelina, as a disinclination for amusement, that prevented the earl and countess mixing in the society suitable to their rank ; for as they perceived that she shrunk not from the observation of any, they knew not when, where, nor how, they might chance to meet her. In short, Angelina scrupled not to pay visits to those individuals who had been introduced to her by the earl, and though the general answer which she received was “not at home,” a lingering spark of female pride was yet gratified by having her carriage seen at the door of some respectable person. Even those whom she had before despised, she now gladly courted, if they could but boast of *respectability* amongst their recommendations to notice. It afforded a faint gratification to

Gwynne-Arthur to know this. “ Well,” thought he, “ she is not so utterly lost,—she yet clings to the *appearance* of that virtue which she has forfeited !”

A painful incident now occurred, to explain which it will be necessary to return to a by-gone period, and to one whom, I hope, the reader has not forgotten.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DOUBLE RENCONTRE.

As some fine dome, of architecture rare,
 Commanding views magnificent and fair,
 Within whose walls once happy inmates dwelt,
 That round them blessings in abundance dealt,
 Where bliss, domestic, sociable, and warm,
 Diffused through all, peace, harmony, and form;
 But fatal storms, and hurricanes come on,
 The scene is blasted, and the circle gone;
 Leaving the mansion desolate and bare:
 Such is the mind that's ravaged by despair!

Spirit of the Lakes.

WITHOUT any of those stage-coach adventures which it is usual, perhaps requisite, for a heroine to encounter, Mabel arrived in Wimpole-street. On entering the house, from

the gloomy aspects and sable garbs of the attendants, she almost feared to meet Lady Williams lest she should be incapable of soothing the expressions of sorrow which her presence might call forth ; but on entering the drawing-room she was agreeably disappointed. Her ladyship was habited in her weeds, indeed, and reclined on a sofa,

“ To feel, or feign, decorous woe,”

but her cheeks were as highly rouged as ever, and the smile with which she saluted Mabel was not that languid and evanescent irradiation which even grief may, for a moment, wear, on the sudden sight of an esteemed object, but the smile of healthful pleasure, and of secret exultation.

Finding that the feelings of Lady Williams required no soothing balm of affectionate consolation, Mabel betook herself involuntarily to the indulgence of her own sorrow. And Gwynne-Arthur was really married, and not to Miss Vaughan, at last, but to one whom he must

eventually blush to acknowledge as his wife ! It was not with any emotion of triumph that Mabel contemplated the disgrace which he had brought upon himself : she mourned for it. “ Oh ! had he married one worthy of him,” thought she, “ I should not have repined—I would have been contented—happy—satisfied with my destiny ; but to live to see Gwynne-Arthur dishonoured,—exposed to public animadversion and contempt—Oh ! I can never bear it.”

Several times Mabel recalled to her mind the scene which had passed between herself and the page at Castle-Gwynne : the mysterious expressions which had then fallen from Angelina were now solved ; it was she who had passed by when Mabel and the baronet were engaged in earnest conversation near the river’s side, it was she too who had so zealously exerted herself for the preservation of Sir Richard Gordon on the night of his apprehension in the cwm ; much mystery still enveloped the bride of Gwynne-Arthur ; and time alone could fathom it. On the arrival of the Gwynne-Arthur family in town, she was

agitated by new fears : the dread of meeting them in some public or private assembly. The countess sent a card of invitation to Miss Glendower, but on the plea of attending to Lady Williams, Mabel excused herself from accepting it.

I hope the reader will do me the favour to recollect that during Miss Glendower's late residence in Cwm-Gwynne, she dispatched a letter to Miss Mac-Alister, and another to Miss Langley, enclosing the epistle of Lady Emma Racket, the superscriptions of which were reversed by Anne Jones, who directed them, therefore each letter was sent to the lady it was not intended for. When the packet reached Miss Mac-Alister, and she had perused its contents and those of the enclosed billet, she instantly divined that some treacherous part had been played by her ladyship and Miss Langley ; and not possessing that fastidiousness of feeling which, perhaps, would have guided Mabel's conduct under similar circumstances, she determined on seizing the first

opportunity to acquaint her brother with the discovery which she had made.

When the baronet, therefore, arrived in London, after the first salutations had passed between them, Helen presented to Sir Richard the treasured epistle, and its envelope. With emotions of astonishment and disgust he read Lady Emma Racket's letter, and afterwards perused the few lines with which Mabel had returned it to the deceitful Flora. They were as follows.

“Madam,

“The inclosed epistle came into my possession by a chance which you, perhaps, have, ere this, discovered. I retained it for the purpose of making such use of its contents as would enable me to extricate myself from the error into which your ungenerous conduct had led me; and now leave you, as far as *I* am concerned, at perfect liberty to acquaint Lady Emma Racket with what “*the haughty Glendower*” has *dared* to do.

M. GLENDOWER.”

With a contemptuous curve of the lip, the baronet tossed her ladyship's epistle from him.

"*Now* what do you think of Lady Emma Racket?" asked Helen, as she raised the letter from the floor.

"Even less than I always thought," replied Sir Richard, "I knew her to be vain, frivolous, and heartless; but I could not have guessed that she would have added falsehood and malice to her list of unamiable qualities."

"I shall not tell Mabel of the discovery which I have made," said Helen, "or she will be angry with me for having acquainted you with it."

"I think you will act perfectly right, and as I am now going to call on Lady Williams, I shall take no notice of the affair."

The baronet bade his sister good morning, and departed.

During his journey to town, Sir Richard Gordon had allowed himself to think deeply; and, if a lover can do so, dispassionately on the

affection which he was cherishing for Mabel Glendower. He knew it to be hopeless—her friendship and esteem he possessed in the highest degree, but her love was all centred in Gwynne-Arthur; and even should she consent to marry him, would not an uneasy emotion ever haunt him when the earl was thrown into their society? Though she should be the tenderest friend—the most devoted wife—would he not sometimes be inclined to think that she still loved another better than himself? Was not jealousy inherent in the human bosom, and under such circumstances could he be exempt from it? Refused, or accepted, his love could never be a happy one, therefore he would conquer his passion, he would henceforth look on Mabel Glendower only as on an amiable and beloved sister. It is well known that the resolutions of a man in love are generally fallible, yet when circumstances concur to make it necessary that affection should be smothered,—when it is a vigorous mind which must be guided by those circumstances,—when there is no reciprocal attachment to break off,

and a single heart is to become the sufferer,—then, it may be painful, but it is also *possible* to stifle the emotions of passion. Such was the case with the baronet: he knew that the pang of separation would be felt by himself alone, and, however severe might be the moment of present suffering, he would endure that pang, rather than risk embittering the remainder of his life even by a union with one he loved. His visits, therefore, to Lady Williams and Miss Glendower, became less frequent; but his deportment, which had never been that of a lover, still evinced the warmest and the strictest friendship.

Sir Richard Gordon seldom joined the evening parties of the Dowager Countess of Castle-Gwynne, because he did not wish to encounter the earl and Angelina; but he often called on a morning, and enjoyed the pleasing society of her ladyship and Miss Vaughan.

When he drew a comparison between the latter lady and Mabel, he could find nothing like superiority in Winny; but when he looked on the artless Winny, and compared her

with the world around him, in what brilliant colors did her perfections shine. She was beautiful, but personal beauty was not with him an object of importance; she was also amiable, and though not extremely vivacious, for at present the pensiveness of a suppressed and powerful passion hung about her, she was enthusiastic, sincere, unaffected, and generous. She was rather younger than Mabel, the energies of her mind had never been called into action, and these circumstances must have had their share in making her appear less dignified than Miss Glendower. There was another idea also, which Sir Richard scarcely allowed himself to entertain, but which would nevertheless obtrude, spite of his endeavours to suppress it—for Winny had too little experience, and the baronet too much, for the one to conceal affection, or the other to remain blind to it—the suspicion that she loved him.

The love which had been felt and professed by Lady Emma Racket, had only inspired him

with contempt and disgust, for the passion, with her, was but a momentary infatuation, built on no exalted feeling; and the heart which had conceived it was vitiated, selfish, and insincere. But in Winny the affection appeared to be the spring—the essence—and the prop of her existence: it was a pure, elevated sentiment, incapable of change or decay; it was not founded on personal liking, nor on the love of admiration, for he had never essayed to flatter her vanity, nor to display his perfections in order to captivate her young heart; he had not sought her love, and by this very negligence he had won it.

Winny did not conceive attachment at first sight: the feeling had ripened gradually; the first impression which she had received from the appearance of the baronet was that of awe, but, by degrees, awe subsided into respect, respect engendered esteem, and these two united produced friendship, friendship warmed into love, love increased into passion, and adoration:—at the

latter point it stood. Sir Richard could not avoid seeing this, he did see it, he felt that, next to Mabel, he could love none so tenderly as Winny ; yet he would not breathe a hint of attachment to her, until perfectly assured that his love for Mabel amounted to nothing more than brotherly regard ; for it would be the height of cruelty to give the slightest encouragement to a passion, which, eventually, he might not be able to return.

The countess, Sir Richard Gordon, and Miss Vaughan, sometimes visited Lady Williams and Mabel, in each other's society ; on the first suspicion which the latter conceived of an attachment existing between the baronet and Winny, a momentary feeling of anguish assailed her, but it was quickly dispelled. " Well," thought she, " they are worthy of each other, may they be happy ! yet it is strange that Miss Vaughan should be twice my rival ; but in a very little time the pang of this event will be over, they will be mutually happy, amiable, and estimable ; but neither time nor circumstances can have

power to efface from memory the painful recollections which thou hast left, Oh, Gwynne-Arthur!" From the secluded life which Mabel now led, little communication respecting the fashionable world could reach her. Percival, indeed, was a constant morning visitor at her residence, which much surprised Mabel, until she remembered that Miss Mac-Alister was almost continually with her, and then the enigma was solved, for an attachment evidently existed between them. From him it was that Miss Glendower learned the whole story of Angelina's detection and disgrace; none can describe the emotions which agitated her as she listened to the recital, but many, perhaps, may guess them; shortly afterwards she received a visit from Miss Vaughan, and that young lady acquainted her with the distressed and melancholy situation of the earl and countess, and the measures which were about to be taken for the purpose of freeing his lordship from the odium which this unhappy connection had brought upon him. From Percival again she heard the auda-

cious conduct of Angela, and the impossibility which existed of ever annulling the marriage.

Agitated in mind, and impaired in health, by the shock of recent dreadful circumstances, Mabel Glendower appeared a changed being; she was pale, thin, and though not heart-broken, seemed sinking into a premature grave. Lady Williams was much alarmed by these symptoms, and endeavoured, by every means in her power, to inspire her with cheerfulness, but her efforts were useless. Mabel could not be drawn into society, she repelled every entreaty of the kind: it was but one feeling prompted her conduct, the fear of meeting the earl, the countess, or Angela. She had beheld Sir Richard Gordon once since the publication of Gwynne-Arthur's disgrace, and then, as though by mutual consent, the painful subject was carefully avoided.

One morning Lady Williams entreated Mabel to pay a visit to Mrs. Forrester, that lady having several times called to see Miss Glendower, on whom she looked with a very partial and admiring eye; her ladyship said it was an act of duty

which Mabel owed to Mrs. Forrester for her kind and marked attention; unwilling to refuse every request which Lady Williams made, loth also to be wanting in proper respect towards one whose heart might ornament a much better-educated mind, Mabel consented. It was but five minutes' walk to Cavendish-square, and the footman accompanied her thither. Mrs. Forrester was at home, and received her with kindness.

The conversation, as Mabel had feared and expected, turned upon the recent fracas in high life, and with an anguished heart she was condemned to listen to recitals which were mortifying in the extreme.

Whilst they were still discoursing on this topic, a carriage stopped at the door, Mrs. Forrester arose and looked out of the window. "Well!" she exclaimed, "there is Lord Gwynne-Arthur at this moment stepping out of his chariot; when he enters, your own eyes will inform you how much this dreadful affair has preyed on his health and spirits."

"Is he coming up?" asked Mabel in alarm.

"Yes, I hear his foot on the stairs."

"I cannot see him!" she exclaimed, "I can not—*will* not see him—where—where shall I fly?" She sprung towards the door.

"You will meet him," said Mrs. Forrester, "if you go out."

"Oh! my dear madam, for heaven's sake hide me somewhere."

"Slip in here," said Mrs. Forrester, raising a curtain which covered a deep recess, wherein stood a marble table, bearing china vases containing perfumes and flowers. "Slip in here, I do not suppose he will stay long, at any rate I shall not betray you."

Mabel glided into the recess, the drapery fell over her, and at the same moment the drawing-room door opened to admit Lord Gwynne-Arthur. The sound of his voice pierced through her soul, to be so near to him—in the same apartment—to listen to his words—and yet neither to speak to—nor to see him—Oh this was misery! What if he should disco-

ver her? to what cause could he attribute her situation, but to that of a mean—an unfeeling curiosity? And yet it was not so, gladly would she have flown from her concealment at that moment, but she could not, without detection; and she was obliged to attend quietly, though not happily, to the conversation which ensued.

When the customary compliments had passed, each sank, for a few moments, into silence. A tender but scarcely indulged wish had prompted this visit of Lord Gwynne-Arthur: it was simply the desire of enquiring after the health of Mabel Glendower. He had not seen her since the night he had mistaken her for Angelina in the aisle of the castle, he did not *wish* to see her under his present circumstances, yet it would afford him great satisfaction to know that she was well, and cheerful—*happy* he could not expect her to be. Mrs. Forrester would never guess the motive which induced this enquiry, and here were no witnesses to dive into the secret of his feelings.

Twice the words hovered on his lips without

finding utterance, but with the third attempt he summoned courage to make a slight enquiry.

“Have you seen Lady Williams lately?” he asked, “and her niece, Miss Glendower? I hope they are well.”

“I saw her ladyship last week,” replied Mrs. Forrester, “and Miss Glendower paid me a visit this morning; has your lordship seen her since your arrival in town?”

“No.”

“Oh, you would scarcely know her: she is so altered.”

“Indeed! in what respect?”

“She has become so thin, and pale, and melancholy; she seems to have lost all her charming spirits. I told her this morning that I should rather take *her* for the *widow* than Lady Williams.”

“Poor Mabel! what reply did she make to that?”

“I do not exactly remember; but Miss Glendower has always been a favourite of mine,

and I am quite vexed at her altered appearance."

"She must be a favourite with all who know her!" exclaimed Gwynne-Arthur, carried away by the impulse of his feelings, "for Mabel Glendower is, without exception, the most amiable being on the face of the earth!"

"I am very glad to find that your lordship is of my opinion, though I cannot get any of the ladies to acknowledge it, except Miss Vaughan and Miss Mac Alister, indeed the latter lady and her brother are so kind to her, that I am quite delighted with them."

"Think you not that there is a degree of attachment existing between Sir Richard Gordon and Miss Glendower?" asked the earl, imprudently, and at the same time eagerly and impatiently.

Mrs. Forrester could not avoid laughing as she remembered the close approximation of Mabel during this interrogation, and replied "I have no right to dive into other people's secrets, nor to discover them if I chance to know them; it

may or may not be the case, I can only say that I think them worthy of each other, and, if they should marry, the union must certainly be a happy one."

A sigh escaped from the bosom of the earl, he arose from his seat, and paced the room slowly.

"Yes" he remarked, after a pause, "they are worthy of each other: none in the world, except the baronet, is worthy of Mabel Glendower—no—not one individual,—and she, of all others, is the only one who deserves Sir Richard Gordon!"

He continued pacing the room silently, and in a few moments the Countess of Castle-Gwynne was announced.

"Indeed!" said the earl, in surprise, "I was not aware that my mother intended going out this morning, or I should have waited to accompany her."

As he spoke, a light footstep approached, and the unblushing De Lairai entered the apartment. It was she who had sent up her name as the

Countess of Castle-Gwynne. Her astonishment seemed to equal the earl's, but she betrayed no symptoms of confusion.

"Angelina!" was his involuntary exclamation, as he stood, almost petrified by her unexpected appearance, in the centre of the room.

"I did not expect to have the honour of meeting my noble *husband* in this abode," were Angelina's first words, uttered in a tone of insulting irony, "but since we *do* meet, Lord Gwynne-Arthur, allow me to present the compliments of a most *obedient wife*."

"*Mockery* added to dishonour!" exclaimed the earl, shocked by the unfeeling address with which Angelina had saluted him. "Who could suppose that such a form could cover a hard and guilty heart?"

"And who could suppose, Lord Gwynne-Arthur, that, after so many professions of passionate attachment, the very object that had called them forth should be thus discarded? you wish to divorce me—to annul our marriage—but I forbid it—not from any regard for you, do not

flatter yourself with the supposition that *I ever* loved you—but because I do not chuse to be divested of the honours I have obtained! To possess the advantages of rank and wealth, I sacrificed myself to a man for whom I had not the smallest degree of affection, and think you that *his* whim or wish shall hurl me from the pinnacle on which his vanity has placed me? Lord Gwynne-Arthur, I owe you nothing: in uniting your fate with mine, you did but follow the impulse of an infatuated inclination, and the completion of your own happiness was the object which you sought—not the welfare of another!”

“Distraction!” exclaimed the earl, “Angelina, you once said that you really loved me, and can a mind so proud as yours stoop to torment and insult a being whom your arts have ruined? You have entailed disgrace on me for ever, and you triumph in the publication of it.”

“Do me the favour to recollect all that passed between us during the first period of our acquaintance. Did I ever encourage the eager

attentions which you paid me? did I ever appear gratified by receiving them? did I say that the conviction of your attachment pleased me? did I accept your first overtures of love? did I not press—entreat—command you to preserve your faith inviolate towards the original of that picture (whom I now recognise in Mabel Glendower)? did I not tell you to beware on whom you placed your hopes of felicity? did I not bid you reflect—deliberate—and think dispassionately on the step which you were about to take? did I not refuse your proffered hand the first time, and the second, that you urged me to accept it? did I not warn you that I had loved before? And were these arts? was this encouragement? was this seduction? Had you not been blinded, intoxicated, by passion, you would have perceived that I loved you not—that I could *not* love a *boy*: it was your own vanity, and not my actions, which inspired you with the idea that you were beloved. You, also, had loved before, Gwynne-Arthur, and had been loved in return; the object of your passion was as

amiable as you could wish, and yet you forsook her—forsook her without a cause, without an excuse for doing so; merely because you happened to see a face handsomer than her's, and a spirit too proud to brook the neglect which she has met with! Was this manly? was this generous, Lord Gwynne-Arthur? Do you not acknowledge in your heart that the punishment is scarcely adequate to your transgression? This Glendower, this infatuated girl, still loves you, and you, perhaps, may feel your fickle heart returning towards her; but you cannot wed her—you dare not profess love for her—you are the husband of another—she would not listen to you, were you to breathe your inconstant passion at her feet. Hear me, Gwynne-Arthur, for I speak truths which shall haunt your memory to the last moment of existence: your whole life shall be consumed in hopeless attachment—you shall see the being whom you love, sink down before you into an untimely grave—withered by your own act—whilst I—I shall be the barrier which shall separate you from happiness!"

“ This contention is vain,” said the earl, scarcely able to restrain the violent emotions which agitated him, “ argument will avail nothing, and since your unpardonable conduct has wrung from my bosom the last spark of love which till now had lingered there, I will not hesitate to inform you that the measures I shall take will effectually shield me from the malediction conveyed in your words. Adieu, Mrs. Forrester, I am sorry that this painful scene should have occurred in your presence, at a future period I will make a more suitable apology. Adieu, madam.”

He moved to leave the room, Angelina threw her small form between him and the door. “ We may never meet again !” she exclaimed, in a voice of strong emotion,—but it was the emotion of rage, “ we may never meet again ; hear then, the declaration of my sentiments for the first time and the last : I never loved *you*, but there is *one* on earth whom I have *long* loved—whom I still *adore*,—he loves me not, he will *never* love again—and yet I was once the idol of his imagination,—but I will possess his heart,

however I may obtain it,—or he shall die— ay, he shall *die* by this hand!” Angelina’s head sunk for a moment upon her bosom, a tear gleamed beneath her dark eye-lash, but did not fall upon her cheek, and her countenance was flushed with anger. “ I now go,” said she, starting suddenly from her attitude, and tossing back her head as though to dispel the wild thoughts which crowded upon her brain, “ I now go—I have done,—but the same wishes I have expressed shall ever follow you, and if your curiosity has been excited by this confession, know that he whom I love—whom I shall ever love—is the same who is, in all respects, your rival—*Sir Richard Gordon!*”

She cast one glance of triumphant scorn upon Gwynne-Arthur, then fled from the apartment, and sprung into her carriage which still waited to receive her.

At the same moment a suppressed groan and a sudden fall, were heard near the spot where the earl still stood, aghast and petrified by the scene which he had just witnessed.

“What is that noise?” he exclaimed, willing to believe that what he saw and heard were but the effects of a fevered dream.

“Oh, nothing,” replied Mrs. Forrester, moving towards the recess, “but if your lordship will step into the next room for a moment, I shall consider it a favour.”

“I fancied I heard a groan,” said the earl, not attending to her request, and advancing also to the recess, he carelessly, but without suspicion, drew aside the curtain. There, on the carpet, in her sable attire, her forehead bleeding from a slight contusion which she had received in falling against the corner of the marble table, lay Mabel Glendower, senseless.

“Gracious Heaven! Mabel *here!*” he exclaimed in anguish and amazement; he cast an enquiring look upon Mrs. Forrester, and again one of grief and pity upon the insensible maiden.

“Oh it was not her fault,” said Mrs. Forrester eager to exculpate her favourite from all blame, “it was not her fault indeed, for when she heard

your lordship coming up stairs, she was going to run away, and insisted on my finding some means of escape for her: I believe, if I had not put her behind this curtain, she would have jumped out of the window rather than meet you."

As she spoke the earl raised Mabel in his arms from the floor, and placed her tenderly on a sofa; but he lost not a word which the lady uttered, they all pierced into a deeply wounded heart.

"Well might she avoid me!" he exclaimed, unable longer to controul his feelings, "well might she essay to fly from me! Oh—had I behaved worthily to her,—had I remembered and preserved my faith towards Mabel Glendower, my present disgrace would not have reached me!"

Whilst Mrs. Forrester was applying restoratives to Mabel, the earl drew off her glove, and perceived the plain gold ring which, in the days of their early intimacy, he had presented to her as a pledge of affection. It did but add another pang to those which he already endured. "She

will not recover !” he exclaimed, bending madly over her pale and stiffened form, “she will not recover—she is dead—and *I* have killed her !—Oh, Mrs. Forrester, look there—see what a being I have murdered !”

“I always suspected that there was an attachment between you,” said Mrs. Forrester, “so you need not be uneasy at this circumstance, for I have not made any new discovery.”

“*Between* us ?” repeated the earl, “Oh not *between* us ! *I* love—but *she* will *hate*—she *must* do so—I deserve no other recompence for the deed which I have done !”

“Hush ! hush !” exclaimed the lady, eager to administer consolation when it was in her power, and anxious to soothe the distraction of the earl. “I know she loves you as tenderly as you love her, and all her present grief is occasioned by your sorrows,—she never allows any one to cast the slightest blame on you for this sad affair,—she always insists that your actions were the effect of a noble and unsuspecting heart, and

that your present distresses are caused by thinking others as guiltless as yourself."

"And does she say this?" sighed Gwynne-Arthur, kneeling beside the couch, and wiping the blood from her temples with his handkerchief, "dear Mrs. Forrester do not betray us—do not mention this event—we are in your power, but act nobly for Mabel's sake! Oh! had I done my duty, I should now have been happy—but I deviated from the path of honour which I ought to have pursued—and what have been the consequences? I have broken my own heart—my mother's—and this poor girl's! Farewell, Mabel Glendower! we must never meet again—Farewell, for ever!"

He leant agitatedly over her, pressed a cold and trembling kiss upon her forehead, then, without addressing another word to Mrs. Forrester, buried his face in his handkerchief, and rushed from the apartment.

In a few moments Mabel revived, and the first enquiry which she made, as her eye glanced

anxiously round the room, was, whether she had been discovered by her morning-guests.

“Oh no,” replied Mrs. Forrester, fearful of alarming and distressing her, “they are both gone, and know nothing about it; so you need not be uneasy in that respect; but take this wine, for you tremble violently; and let me bind up your forehead, you struck it in falling, and it may become painful if we do not attend to it.”

Mabel thanked her, but was unable to assist the lady in her kind offices, and burst into tears.

“I am glad to see you weep,” said Mrs. Forrester, “it will relieve you; do not be offended, my dear Miss Glendower, if I say I have penetrated the secret of your melancholy: you love Lord Gwynne-Arthur. Ah! you start and blush, and tremble, but I will not betray you; be assured that the earl loves you most sincerely; you heard what he said of you before that fiend came in, and the expression of his countenance,

as he spoke, was even more forcible than his words. You have his *love*, Mabel, though you should never possess his hand."

"But the conviction of the former," exclaimed Mabel, involuntarily, "will be a sufficient compensation for the loss of the latter!"

"You have my fervent wishes to enjoy both," was the reply, and Mrs Forrester now wisely dropped the subject. She placed a muslin bandage on Mabel's temple, and, when Miss Glendower was sufficiently recovered to depart, ordered her carriage and conveyed her home.

On arriving in Wimpole-street, Mrs. Forrester made such an apology for the wound on Mabel's forehead as was deemed necessary, and, it being very trifling, Lady Williams made no further enquiry concerning it.

During the remainder of that day, Mabel's thoughts were entirely engrossed by the dreadful scene which she had just witnessed: she acknowledged, with regret, that much truth had been contained in Angela's harsh upbraidings to the earl; yet, surely they might have been dis-

pensed with : Gwynne-Arthur had been thoughtless, but not criminal ; oh ! had he even *injured her*, she could never have taught her lips to speak unkindly to him ; but he was now, as Angelina had expressed it, the husband of another ; it was wrong to entertain the slightest spark of affection for him, and though her heart should break with the exertion,—she must stifle it for ever.

On the following morning, as Miss Glendower was standing near the window, she perceived an elegant curricule stop at the door, and Sir Richard Gordon alight from it. In a few moments he entered the drawing-room, he was surprised and alarmed to observe the bandage on her brow, and enquired the cause : she replied that she had met with a slight accident, and introduced another subject. Lady Williams complained of the decaying state of Mabel's health alleging that she could never prevail on her to mix in cheerful society, nor to take proper exercise ; the baronet solicited Miss Glendower to accompany him in an airing, and after much intreaty from Lady

Williams and Sir Richard, she consented ; yet she had not refused from any motives of affectation, for Mabel was too proud to affect—but from the fear of being exposed to the observation and jealousy of the vindictive Angelina.

In a few moments she was equipped, entered the curricule, and the baronet drove off.

“ We will visit the Royal Academy,” said Sir Richard, “ if you have no objection to mixing in the bustle of the Strand.”

“ Oh, not the least,” answered Mabel, quickly, “ there are moments in life when bustle is preferable to solitude.”

No reply was made, and little conversation passed between them until they arrived at the exhibition. On leaving Somerset House the baronet said, as he handed Mabel to his equipage, “ shall we return through the Park, I have a small communication to make ?”

“ Certainly, if you wish it.”

“ I am glad to perceive that this little excursion has risen your spirits.”

“ You are very kind,” she replied with a

languid smile, and they proceeded, discoursing only on such subjects as obtruded themselves, at every step, upon their notice.

Passing the top of Piccadilly, the baronet desired Mabel to look up to a window under which they had nearly arrived; Mabel obeyed him, and there, in the drawing-room of a house situated opposite the Green Park, she beheld a group of ladies crowding to gaze upon them as they rode below. A second glance informed her that they were no other than the Langleys and Lady Emma Racket. Her ladyship was habited in a silk morning-dress of *couleur de rose tendre*, and, with an insulting smile, raised an opera-glass to her eye as they passed. Mabel blushed and drew back.

“I wish you had not desired me to look up,” she exclaimed, “they have recognised me!”

“Certainly,” replied Sir Richard, smiling, “I wished them to do so: I was ambitious of letting the malicious Lady Emma perceive that an evil action always recoils upon itself. Ask me no questions, Mabel, but I am well aware

to who's generosity we are indebted for that little fracas which once took place between us."

Mabel looked towards him in astonishment, and the baronet burst into his own pleasing, peculiar, and mirth-inspiring laugh. A serious emotion suddenly crossed his brow, and, with a dignified and pensive countenance, he said, "Mabel, I once offered my whole heart to you : what would you say were I to inform you that, at present, you possess but half of it?"

"I would say," exclaimed Mabel, her eyes beaming with a sacred pleasure, and her countenance glowing with enthusiasm. "I would say, if the object who claims that half is worthy of your heart, ah, give it wholly to her, only allow me still to retain that portion of it which you dedicate to friendship."

"And do you really deem that friendship worth possessing?"

"Oh, it will be the treasure of my existence ! It would be both presumptuous and vain in me to suppose that I had ever concealed from you any of the feelings which have agitated me ;

I am conscious that you are aware, even at this moment, of the emotions I experience; you know, therefore, that were I to contract an engagement with any one, there would be moments when my heart would return fondly—though foolishly—to early remembrances: and would not this be wronging a noble mind that reposed on me for happiness? I know the lady to whom you allude—she loves you—she is worthy of you. Oh, may you be happy! exceedingly happy; as happy as Mabel Glendower can wish you to be!”

“But, my dear Mabel, you must not allow this weight of affliction to bear you into the tomb,—it not for your own sake, for that of your friends, rouse yourself from this melancholy.”

“Oh, do not fear me,” she replied with a blush and a smile, “I shall not break my heart: Lady Williams proposes going to France, and I doubt not that time and change of scene will restore me to my former cheerfulness. The general maxim of my life will make me happy under

any circumstances, except those of guilt : provided we act with strict integrity and honour, the events which occur will terminate ultimately for our good."

They were now within the gate of the park. A splendid equipage approached and drew up at their side ; it was an open carriage, containing the earl, the countess, and Miss Vaughan. What a painful meeting ! With a grateful pleasure Mabel returned the kind salutation of the countess, and inclined her head slightly to the earl ; she did not raise her veil, but he perceived, through the crape, the small bandage which covered her brow, and that assured him that the scene which he had witnessed on the preceding day had been something more than a dream. Winny Vaughan appeared gratified to meet her, and trembled with confusion when addressed by the baronet.

Whilst they were engaged in conversation, and the countess was enquiring of Miss Glendower what she had seen in the exhibition, a dashing chariot, bearing the Gwynne-Arthur arms and

liveries, approached; it passed quite close to them, and the party beheld the countenances of Angelina and Manfredini turned towards them in eager expectation. A painful emotion crossed the features of the countess, she gave the signal to the coachman, bowed her hand to the baronet and Mabel, and the carriage drove on. As Miss Glendower returned the compliment, she perceived the eyes of Gwynne-Arthur fixed pensively on her countenance: she turned hastily to Sir Richard, and began to speak of Miss Vaughan in terms which could not fail to give him pleasure.

The curricie proceeded towards Cumberland-gate, and in a short time they were set down in Wimpole-street.

“Farewell, Mabel,” said Sir Richard as he quitted her. “Be not surprised if you hear sudden news—I may have no opportunity of speaking to you further on any subject—but not my *wife* can ever possess a higher place in my *esteem* than *you* do! Farewell!”

“To be assured of *your* happiness” replied

Mabel, "will be one great step towards the completion of my own : there is none on earth I respect more highly," and she added, with an unsuccessful attempt at gaiety and a heart too feelingly alive to the truth of the expressions to utter them well,

" Adieu, my friend ! Be me forgot,
And from thy mind erased !
But may that happiness be thine,
Which *I* can never taste !"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

—————"The heart, once full
Of bitter sorrow, has not room for more ;
It can but feel to its extremity,
And so doth mine : all woes, that now may come,
Pass lightly, for no human power can bring
Sorrows to equal those which I have felt."

ON perceiving Angelina's chariot turn towards the Kensington-road, the countess had ordered her coachman to drive through Grosvenor-gate ; he obeyed her, and in a short time the party alighted at their own residence, Miss Vaughan hastened to make her toilette, and the earl and countess repaired to the drawing-room. Each seemed deeply wounded by this rencontre, and,

for a while, neither of them spoke. At length the countess said, as she turned her countenance from the enquiring glance of her son.

“Anthony, shall we go to France?”

“Any-where in the world, my mother, to be free from misery.”

“Then, if you approve, we will depart in the beginning of next month,” said Lady Gwynne-Arthur, “but there is one I shall regret to leave,—Mabel Glendower.”

“Poor Mabel!” sighed the earl; he lay back on the sofa where he was reclining, and threw his handkerchief over his face. A silence of some moments ensued, at length Gwynne-Arthur continued thus.

“Mother, I have something pressing on my mind which I have long wished, but never found courage, to disclose to you. I think I should be happier if you were acquainted with it, and yet I scarcely know how to tell you:—I knew Mabel Glendower long before I met her at Doctor Jones’s cottage. I knew her father.”

“Her father!” exclaimed the countess in

agitation and astonishment. "What! Owen Glendower?"

"It is true."

The cheek of the countess turned pale, she sunk on a chair, and hastily bade him go on.

"I visited him often," continued the earl, "during our residence at Castle-Gwynne, ere I departed for the continent;—I saw him during his last illness,—and yet you knew not this,—there was reasons which made me fear to tell you—I had seen his daughter—I loved, passionately loved her,—I knew the high hopes which you entertained for me, and I dreaded to acquaint you with our intimacy lest I should be for ever separated from the object of my affection. Shall I proceed? shall I disclose to you how ill—how ungenerously I acted? will you not despise me for it? I acknowledged my love, I won her young heart—I went abroad, beheld this dazzling syren, and Mabel Glendower was forgotten! yet how angelically has she borne it! no sound—not even a look of reproach have I

received from her, nor has she seemed to feel conscious of our former friendship ;—but mark her pale cheek, her dimmed eye, her wasted form, she is sinking into the tomb, nothing can deceive me, I know it all, she is *dying*, and it is the ingratitude of your son which has slain her !”

The brow of the countess had sunk gradually upon her hand, and she burst into tears. “Surely,” she exclaimed, “it is not ordained that I should cause the misery of both the child and the parent ! Oh, Anthony, *I* dare not reproach you : that Owen Glendower—how shall I confess it ? that Owen Glendower was the object of my early attachment—he loved me—but my ambitious temper overpowered even the violence of early love—I quitted him—I accepted the hand of your father, merely because he could bestow a title with it ; and, though love may have followed the union, it did not precede it !”

Her voice became smothered by sobs, and she wept freely ; her son, who had listened to

her in amazement, did not attempt to break the silence: there was a strange coincidence in the circumstances, a humiliation in the disclosure of them; and yet it is impossible to say how the scene would have ended, had not a servant entered the room to present a small packet to the earl, and inform him that a person below earnestly entreated to speak with him in private.

“Where is he?” asked Gwynne-Arthur.

“In the library, my lord.”

The earl opened the parcel, and after divesting it of many envelopes, discovered the contents to be only—the stranger’s ring! Astonished, alarmed, and fearful of again losing sight of this mysterious being, the earl sprung from the sofa, and without assigning any cause for this unexpected action, rushed down the stairs. He stopped when near the library, and slowly opened door.

There, leaning against a table, his head uncovered, his back turned towards the entrance, and, though it was a warm evening in the latter

end of April, his tall, majestic figure still shrouded in the long cloak, stood the melancholy and interesting stranger. He turned on hearing a footstep, and beheld the earl. A faint glow overspread his cheek as he said, "My lord, I come to pay you."

"To *pay* me?" repeated his lordship, "I am glad to see you—I have often wished to meet you since we parted. I have much to ask—"

"Ask nothing—I will inform you more than you can ask. I shall not long linger above the grave, but I will perform *one* act of justice ere I sink into it."

A tear started to his eye, he walked to the window, hemmed away his emotion, then returned, took a seat at the table, and gave the earl the promised communication.

* * * * *

If it is possible for the human bosom to experience at the same moment the extremes of horror and of joy, they were felt by the earl;

but the latter emotion was tempered by the reflection that he was in the presence of a noble, an injured, and an unhappy being.

According to the measures agreed upon between them, Gwynne-Arthur summoned Mr. Jenkins, acquainted him in a few words with the substance of the stranger's information, then flew up stairs, to his mother, with a wild and agitated aspect, and bade her farewell for a few hours.

“ But whither are you going, Anthony ? ” she enquired in alarm.

“ Oh, ask me not,” he exclaimed, “ I know nothing yet—I shall be perfectly safe—you need not entertain any vain apprehensions: Mr. Jenkins will be with me. I have a dreadful scene to witness. Farewell ! ”

He hastened back to the library, and in a few moments the countess, from a window, perceived him enter the carriage accompanied by Mr. Jenkins and a stranger. The vehicle turned down Grosvenor-street.

“ Oh God, I cannot go !” exclaimed the earl, as they drew near to the square. “ I cannot go through this dreadful ceremony, let me alight, I will wait here until you return.”

“ Remember,” said Mr. Jenkins, laying his hand on the arm of Gwynne-Arthur, “ that the whole happiness of your future life depends upon this moment. The struggle may be violent, but it will be short: it is the last pang you will endure. My lord, collect your firmness, this tenderness for an infamous and hardened being, is not worthy of you !”

“ Remember, also,” added the gentle voice of the stranger, “ that, however great may be *your* sufferings, they cannot equal *mine*.”

The carriage, at this moment, stopped before the residence of Angelina. Mr. Jenkins enquired if the countess was at home, was answered in the affirmative, and entered the house. The earl learnt back in the carriage, and a scalding tear forced its way down his cheek. A deep sigh escaped the bosom of the stranger.

In the mean time Mr. Jenkins, having delivered his card, was invited to walk up to the drawing room. Angelina, sumptuously but voluptuously arrayed, was reclining on an elegant couch; Manfredini sat near her. Neither of them moved on the entrance of Mr. Jenkins, and, for a moment, that gentleman felt abashed by the audacity which they displayed.

“ Well, Sir,” said the count, “ to what cause are we indebted for this visit?”

“ I am commissioned by the earl of Castle-Gwynne,” replied Mr. Jenkins, “ to enquire whether Madame De Lairai still chuses to retain a title of which she must shortly be deprived? to ascertain whether she will consent to a divorce, or stand the test of public investigation?”

“ In the name of my sister, the Countess of Castle Gwynne, I beg to inform his lordship, that neither persuasion nor force can divest her of that which she has honourably and legally obtained.”

“ Will you permit Lord Gwynne-Arthur to

“speak a few words for himself? His carriage waits at the door, and he entreats an interview.”

“Certainly, we do not fear him : allow him to appear.”

Mr. Jenkins turned towards the door, and desired an attendant to inform the earl that his presence was required. The man hastened to obey him.

Neither the countess nor Manfredini had invited Mr. Jenkins to take a seat, and he now stood near the door, contemplating Angelina's appearance. What a pity, he thought, that any thing so beautiful should become so wicked!

She still retained her recumbent position; her small foot rested on a velvet cushion, her dress was of white satin, diamonds glittered amongst the sable tresses of her hair, a diamond necklace encircled her fair neck, and gems of the same description sparkled on her fingers, and on the beautiful arm which supported her head; the other was half concealed by a scarf of pink

gauze, twisted carelessly around it, and intermingled with her dark ringlets. She turned gracefully towards Manfredini, and, with a smile of derision, entered into conversation with him in Italian.

In the mean time the earl, followed by the stranger, had quitted the carriage, they ascended the stairs together, and the latter, as he leant upon the arm of Gwynne-Arthur, seemed to cling to him for support. In approaching the drawing-room he shrunk back for a moment, and beckoned the earl to precede him into the room ; Gwynne-Arthur did so, but spoke not as he entered : he was required to witness, not to act in, the scene which was to follow.

Divested of his hat, and with a steady pace, the tall figure of the stranger marched into the apartment. He did not speak, but fixed his eyes stedfastly upon the syren countess. A wild shriek escaped her as she beheld him, whilst her lips turned pale, and her frame trembled with affright.

“Julia Morelli, *my wife*!” he uttered; in the deep low tone of suppressed anguish.

She sprang upon her feet, stood for a moment like a beautiful image turned to stone, then said “Oh! God, it is my *husband*!” and fell lifeless upon the floor. Her screams were re-echoed from the adjoining room, and Zizi, in alarm, rushed forward. Perceiving the situation of the countess, she ran to her, exclaiming “*Ah! mon Dieu! ma mere! Vous avez tué ma mere!*”

Mr. Jenkins hastened to her assistance and placed her on a sofa, whilst Zizi essayed to revive her: Manfredini, the earl, and Morelli, stood, almost petrified by the shock which they had received, gazing upon each other with widely differing emotions.

“Mother?” repeated Gwynne-Arthur, glancing towards Zizi, and addressing the stranger. “That, then, is your child,—and the daughter of An—of—of your—*wife*?”

Morelli bowed his head in assent, and moved a few paces towards the couch, as though to gaze

upon the insensible form of his once-loved Julia; Gwynne-Arthur feared to look towards her, lest any emotion of tenderness should revive in his bosom for one who was now, not only guilty, but the wife of another. Morelli seemed to bend for a moment, fondly, over her pallid features, and then turned to view his child ; but in the next instant he started from his employment, and hastily caught himself away, apparently fearing that this short indulgence would unnerve a just but painful resolution. He now stood erect and motionless, at a short distance from her, and in a few moments she revived.

Not yet overwhelmed beyond the confusion of surprise, she looked boldly upon them, and raising herself on her arm, she thus addressed the wretched Morelli. “So then, my destruction is complete, and your task is accomplished. You swore to be revenged, Augustus, for the injuries which I have heaped upon you, and now that revenge is gratified ; but think not, though great is the fall, that it shall have power to stun me ;

a spirit yet glows within my bosom which may cause even my haughty enemies to tremble : ye all have done your worst, and now I will do mine ! Augustus Morelli, why comest thou like a spectre from the grave to haunt my path, and disturb my moments of tranquillity ? Did I not swear never to behold thee more ? Thinkest thou that the love which could not be regained by kindness may be won by vengeance ?”

“ Unhappy woman !” replied Morelli, “ think not that I entertain even a lingering wish to possess a love which has been prostituted to so many : that form, however lovely it may appear to others, can display no charms for me since it has lost its white robe of innocence : were you to kneel at my feet, and entreat me to receive the heart which you once so freely gave, Julia ! I could not *now* accept it ! Nor is it the desire of vengeance which has impelled my visit : I could feel no gratification in plunging into misery a being already so deeply involved in guilt :—it was a feeling more powerful than either of these—a call more imperative :—the

duty of a father. Give me back my child, ere her young mind has become as vitiated as thine own,—give me back my child, and, by that redeeming act, oh! save thyself from a husband's curse—from eternal perdition!"

"Will you promise," she asked with the same haughty and unabashed countenance, "never to molest me more—never to interfere with my pursuits in any shape?"

"When those pursuits are guiltless they shall experience no interruption from *me*,—but Oh! Julia, ere it is too late, return to that virtue which thou hast forsaken; divest thyself of those gorgeous ornaments, and kneel for mercy at the feet of Omnipotence. Thy sins are grievous and heavy, but seek for pardon whilst it is to be obtained. God pardons faults which men cannot forgive! Julia, I did love thee once—I could weep over thee now, thou poor lost being!—but—Oh! great God! have mercy on this guilty woman!"

Julia had hitherto remained silent, her countenance overshadowed by a sullen pride; and

now, turning with a look of haughty impatience to the earl, she exclaimed. “ Lord Gwynne-Arthur, your wish is accomplished: you now perceive that I am not your wife, that I have no further claim on you, therefore your presence here is irksome. Augustus Morelli, to-morrow your daughter shall be resigned to you; and now, since the hopes of both are gratified, I imagine that I may be allowed to enjoy the privacy of this apartment without intrusion.”

“ Adieu, Julia!” sighed her husband, whilst an involuntary tear rolled down his manly cheek. “ One penitent sigh from you would ease this bosom of a world of pain. May we meet in Heaven: but on earth I can only pity—I must never more *esteem* you! Adieu!”

Morelli hastily quitted the apartment.

“ May heaven forgive you, Angelina, as sincerely as *I* do!” exclaimed Gwynne-Arthur, clasping his hands with fervency, and advancing a pace nearer to her. “ May the succeeding part of your life be less guilty than the former!

Farewell, and the God of mercy look down upon you !”

He rushed from the scene, followed by Mr. Jenkins, and sprung agitatedly into the carriage.

Morelli bowed, as he stood on the pavement, and was moving away.

“ Whither are you going ?” asked Mr. Jenkins, “ Do you not intend to return with us ?”

“ I will see the earl to-morrow, after having obtained my daughter,” was the reply, given in a tone of smothered emotion, and drawing his hat over his eyes, to conceal the agitation of his countenance, he hastened down a neighbouring street. The earl threw himself back in the carriage, and—wept; yes, he really *wept*: they were tears of agony: this closing scene had overpowered even the steadfastness of *masculine* feeling !

On arriving at the door of his mother’s habitation, Gwynne-Arthur pressed the hand of Mr. Jenkins, and desiring him to acquaint the

countess with what had happened, he repaired to his own chamber to enjoy the luxury of private sorrow.

Whilst Mr. Jenkins is making this communication towards the countess, we will perform a similar duty to the reader, and acquaint him with the substance of that information which the earl had, at different periods, received from the Duke of W——, the Marquis, Lord Emerson, Sir Richard Gordon, and, finally, from Morelli.

The beautiful but depraved Julia was the daughter of an Italian gentleman of small fortune. At the age of sixteen she had eloped from her father's house, with the younger son of a noble family, the unfortunate Morelli; and after having dwelt together in indigence but in happiness, for the space of five years, during which period Zizi was born, they settled in Leghorn, where Morelli entered into the business of merchandize. One night, on returning home, after having spent the evening with a party

of acquaintances, Morelli found that his wife had quitted his habitation, bearing with her the infant Julia; and, on an investigation of this circumstance, he discovered that she had departed with the manager of a small company of strolling theatricals. Enraged at this unprovoked dishonour, yet still glowing with tenderness for one whom he had once so fondly doated on, he pursued and found her; an interview was the result. On his knee, Morelli entreated her to return to virtue: he offered to take her again to his bosom, and fly with her into foreign parts, where they might live secluded from shame and enquiry; but she refused, and they parted, as they then imagined, for ever.

Julia became the idol of her paramour; they travelled to Naples, and having, since her residence with her new lover, obtained the advantages of instruction from the best masters in the various accomplishments of singing, dancing, acting, &c. Julia was introduced upon the stage. Her beautiful person, her graceful movements, her harmonious voice, and bewitch-

ing fascination of manner, could not fail to attract notice: the reigning prince beheld her: he sent her rich presents, sued for her love, obtained it, and she was shortly afterwards removed to grace his court. For a little while Julia basked in the sunshine of royal favour, but being too widely liberal in the gift of her affections, it was not long ere she was dismissed to make room for a more faithful mistress. From the prince she passed to several nobles of the court, but having disgusted them all, in turn, by her extravagance and infidelity, she was again obliged to have recourse to her former profession—acting.

Her fine voice and musical abilities recommended her to a small Operatic corps, and after having, for some years, experienced all the vicissitudes of a theatrical life, she happened to encounter, amongst the last dramatic company which she joined, the youthful and elegant Antonio Dalzel. An intimacy was immediately formed, their dispositions were in unison, no scruples of conscience perplexed either of them

their plans were laid, communicated to each other, and mutual approbation was elicited. Theatrical life was forsaken,—they departed for Paris, to pass as brother and sister: Dalzell as the Count Manfredini, and Julia, under the assumed name of Angelina, as the widow of a noble general of the house of De Lairai. Julia still retained in her possession several valuables which had been presented to her by her numerous admirers, some of these were exchanged for money at Genoa, and the produce enabled them to make a dashing debüt in the French capital.

On her way through Florence, Julia heard that Morelli was dead, and now considering herself released from all bonds, and finding that notwithstanding the chequered life which she had led, she could, at the age of thirty-seven, without detection pass for *twenty-seven*, tired also of the uncertain smiles of voluntary favour, she wished to secure to herself a permanent establishment by—marriage! For this purpose, with the assistance of Manfredini, a long chain

of fascination was spread, which effectually enthralled, in succession, the gallant Duke of W.—the Marquis of L.—Lord Emerson, and several others. Each had penetrated into the schemes of the deceitful pair, disappointed their expectations, but retained as a mistress her whom they had rejected as a wife. Melville happened to be amongst those who admired at a distance.

Mortified at the failure of her plans, though not shaken from her purpose, Julia changed the whole tenour of her conduct. The beautiful villa was engaged, and she retired to it: she was no longer the gay and sprightly courtesan, but the romantic, the pensive, the sentimental child of solitude: *acting* was familiar, and it required no effort to *assume* a character.

After a few months of seclusion, she ceased to attract notice, even her name was almost forgotten, and it was at this period that Sir Richard Gordon arrived in Paris, after a long continental tour, and became accidentally introduced to Manfredini. As a *favour* the latter brought the

baronet to the habitation of his *sister*. The visit was repeated, and as love is always selfish, Sir Richard never hinted to another that he knew aught of Manfredini and the comtesse, lest it should be the means of introducing a rival to her notice. The net was spread, the modest graceful, and dignified deportment—the melancholy smile—the involuntary sigh—the lute—the voice—and the evening rambles—all were resorted to, and succeeded beyond their warmest expectations: Sir Richard loved to distraction;—he doated on her—there was not a being in the world like Angelina—Oh! if she should reject his passion, he must be miserable for ever! Not even the fastidiousness of the baronet could find aught in her to disapprove, she was in all respects so perfectly angelic. Julia had also conceived a strong and violent passion for Sir Richard Gordon: she felt that she had never loved till now, he was all on earth to her, the idol of her heart, the star of her destiny. The declaration was made, the hand offered, and both were received by Julia with a tumultuous

pleasure. The period for the union was fixed, both loved ardently, both were satisfied, and both were happy.

On the eve of his bridal, in the fulness of a lover's raptures, Sir Richard Gordon communicated to a friend the happiness which awaited him; that friend started in horror from the information, and acquainted him with the real character of the woman he was about to marry. With anguish and incredulity Sir Richard listened to the recital of several disgusting circumstances, and though still doubting the truth of the communication, consented to postpone his marriage until the point should be cleared up to his satisfaction. He wrote to Angelina assigning some fictitious cause for this delay, but did not trust himself to visit her.

In the mean time, I must inform the reader that, during their residence in Paris, Dalzell had formed a connection with certain banditti who infested the country, and who made a practice of retiring from the search of police to the obscurity of the Chateau Noir. It was just

after the receipt of the baronet's epistle, when both were involved in apprehension and anxious conjecture, that Julia and her companion were walking in a meadow near their habitation, and were rescued from the fury of a bandit whom Manfredini had offended, by the interposition of the earl and Mr. Jenkins. Manfredini instantly recognised them, and fearing that they had entirely lost the baronet, entreated Julia to endeavour to secure the earl. Still hoping to regain Sir Richard, she for a time refused to comply with this proposal, but at length, fearing from the silence and protracted absence of the baronet, that he had indeed forsaken her, she consented, and his lordship was accordingly invited to the cottage.

During this time, the friends of Sir Richard had been essaying to convince him of the profligacy of the woman with whom he had been on the point of connecting himself: undeniable proofs were produced, and at length they brought him intelligence that the Earl of Castle Gwynne was at that period a guest within her habitation;

Fired at this information, yet scarcely crediting it, though resolving to ascertain its truth or falsehood, he departed for the abode of Angelina. He arrived late at night, it was his intention to do so, for he considered that if any one was within her residence, he should, by that means, discover him. Apologising to the comtesse for his abrupt visit, he informed her that he must depart early on the morrow for 'Toulon, but would shortly return to Paris, and had therefore come to bid her farewell. As he leant over the table, from which the earl had just arisen, he perceived that song which he afterwards sung to Mabel, with the name of Gwynne-Arthur written at the bottom of it, and which he then appropriated for himself; deeming it a substantial evidence that the earl *had been* there, if he was not there at present.

It was Sir Richard Gordon's flute which Gwynne-Arthur had listened to on that night, and not a Ferdinand's as Julia had informed him; they were the shadows of Sir Richard and the comtesse which he had seen moving on the

gravel walk beneath his window—it was the figure of the baronet which he saw cross the lawn, and mount his horse at a short distance. It was to prevent a meeting between the earl and Sir Richard, that Julia had conducted Gwynne-Arthur to the Chateau Noir on the following evening, for though the baronet had named his intention of visiting Toulon, the wily Julia had her doubts on that subject. It was Sir Richard's flute which had sounded near the river's side as they were returning from the Chateau Noir: he had chosen this expedient to convince himself of what he dreaded to know; he saw Gwynne-Arthur, heard his voice, and recognised in him the lover of Angelina. Julia knew the sound, it was impossible to mistake it: the die was cast, she felt that her sun of happiness had set, yet was she sufficiently mistress of herself to conceal the wild emotions which preyed upon her mind. It was with the hope of yet regaining the baronet that Julia had not accepted any of the many offers which Gwynne-Arthur had made to her; and it was after the

receipt of an epistle from Sir Richard, informing her of the discovery he had made, and relinquishing all claim on her affections, which arrived, as the reader may remember, on the following morning, whilst she was engaged in conversation with Gwynne-Arthur; that she consented to become the wife of the latter.

During the first period of their intimacy, Sir Richard had received from the hands of his beloved Angela her miniature, on which he had presented her with his own; and it was whilst burning with the anger of abused affection, and unable to endure the thought of having his picture exposed to the observation, perhaps to the derision, of a new lover, that he determined to visit her, to return her miniature, and reclaim his own. It was whilst engaged on this mission that he encountered the earl, as has been related. Not for an instant did Sir Richard suppose that Angelina was the *wife* of Lord Gwynne-Arthur: Oh! no, she could be only his *mistress*: none but himself could have been so deceived. On his arrival at Castle Gwynne,

and encountering the earl unaccompanied by Angela, this idea was confirmed ; but perceiving that his lordship was much discomposed by the song, “*Tu no sabes lo qu’es amor,*” which the baronet also had learned of De-Lairai, hearing that the lute had been borrowed from Lord Gwynne-Arthur’s French page, and observing that it bore a great resemblance to that of the comtesse, he resolved to dive if possible into the mystery of this affair : he asked his lordship for the loan of his page, the confusion of the earl at this demand was conviction.

It may be remembered that when Miss Glendower, after having visited the ball in disguise, made her precipitate retreat to the castle gardens, Anne affirmed that they were followed by some one from the ball-room, and their apprehensions on this subject were only interrupted by the sound of sweet and solemn music on the terrace above. He who had followed them was Sir Richard Gordon, eager to discover the place of Mabel’s residence ; and the mysterious music was the sound of Julia’s lute, accompanied by

her voice. The baronet also heard this, and finding that Mabel had eluded him, ascended to discover its origin,—met, and recognised Angelina. Fearing to trust himself in the presence of this syren, amazed and shocked to find that she was really the bride of Gwynne-Arthur, he fled hastily from the scene, and walked round the park to compose his tumultuous feelings ere he returned to the castle. It was with the conviction that an eternal barrier was fixed between the earl and Mabel, that he persisted in his professions of attachment to the latter.

The note which the baronet wrote to the earl, on quitting Castle-Gwynne, contained an offer of explanation for his former conduct; which would have been effected by the exposure of De Lairai: but the earl, conceiving that he had already been informed of every thing which it was necessary for him to know, had declined accepting the proffered communication.

During this period Sir Richard did not quit the neighbourhood of the cwm, yet feared to appear openly there, lest he should encounter

one whom he now seduously strove to avoid—Angelina. Whilst residing at the castle he had formed an intimacy with Valentine, indeed it was a gratification to both to sit under the shade of some old oak, and vie with each other in the praise of Mabel Glendower. Sir Richard confided the secret of his passion to the minstrel, and though he would have preferred a “Cambry” to a “Saison,” as the husband of Mabel Glendower, he yet esteemed the baronet for his individual nobleness, and willingly assisted him in his views. At the distance of two miles from the cwm stood a lone cottage, inhabited by honest and decent people, and here Sir Richard obtained a residence, during the time that he remained disguised in the neighbourhood. He judged that the only means by which he could give Mabel notice of his vicinity, without exposing himself to the observation of Angela, would be to serenade her; he entreated Valentine to accompany him in the expedition, the minstrel consented, and they repaired to her habitation on the night of Christmas-eve.

Valentine was well acquainted with the situation of Mabel's bed-room, therefore conducted the baronet beneath its window. On separating, the minstrel promised to meet Sir Richard on the following night for the same purpose.

We must now, for a little while, return to Morelli. A violent fit of illness, occasioned by the infamous conduct of his wife, had brought him nearly to the verge of the grave; and careless of worldly affairs, anxious only to follow and observe the actions of Julia, and, if possible, to regain his child, he caused the report of his death to be spread, which succeeded in reaching her ears. When this was accomplished, he departed on his melancholy tour, and arrived in Paris just at that period when Julia had retired to her seclusion. Notwithstanding the privacy in which she dwelt, her conduct was narrowly watched by Morrelli.

"This is not a time," thought he, "to punish her; let her attain the eminence for which she

sighs, let her mount the pinnacle of her ambition, and the fall will be greater !”

He contrived means to obtain a sufficient view of the earl, to enable him to recognise his lordship if they should meet again ; he knew, too, that they were married, yet he appeared not : the hour was not come for full and ripe revenge. Suddenly the cottage became deserted, and he lost all trace of them ; but after various and repeated enquiries, he discovered that the Earl of Castle-Gwynne had departed for his native country ; and judging that Julia had accompanied him, he determined to follow : he embarked at Rochelle, and shortly afterwards arrived in London.

Impaired in health, and reduced in finances, Morelli proceeded by cheap and tedious conveyances to the borders of Wales, whence his money being exhausted, he was necessitated to walk to the place of his destination, depending on the humanity of strangers for shelter and direction. Whilst seated in a cottage where he had obtained the privilege of resting for the

night, two gentlemen suddenly entered ; in one he immediately recognised the being whom he sought,—the Earl of Castle-Gwynne ; but as his lordship was accompanied by a stranger, Morelli forbore to address him. Perceiving their route on leaving the cot, he had followed and again crossed their path at the entrance of the village. On the following day, as soon as morning dawned, Morelli repaired to the vicinity of the habitation which accommodated Lord Gwynne-Arthur ; he watched his movements throughout that day, and seeing him stroll to the theatre in the evening, accordingly followed. Of this the reader knows the result.

Half angry with the earl at the neglect of his epistle, and shaken, by some involuntary emotions of tenderness, from his resolution, he determined on deferring his meditated explanation : he would reveal it to Julia in private, he would entreat her to recede from her ill-gotten splendour, without exposing herself to the scorn of the world ; and it was this resolution which prevented him disclosing to Gwynne-Arthur the

substance of his promised communication, when they afterwards met at the cottage of William Walter Morgan.

The curious ring, which, in the days of early attachment, he had received as a pledge of love from Julia, he still retained in his possession: nothing could induce him to relinquish this, for not even her profligacy and dereliction from duty, had yet power to tear her wholly from his heart: accident released it from the bundle which contained his little all, and accident threw it into the possession of Lord Gwynne-Arthur. What emotion did not that ring create in the bosom of Julia, when she beheld it? The conviction that her husband still lived, flashed upon her mind; Gwynne-Arthur might meet him. Oh, heaven, she might be discovered, unless means were taken to prevent it: the earl must be deprived of this ring—but not by her; and the stranger whom his lordship had encountered, whoever he might be, must be speedily removed from the possibility of injuring her. Two hardy active fellows who had long been at the command

of Julia, had followed her from the continent, and still lay in secret in the neighbourhood of Castle Gwynne; these were resorted to, their plans were laid and accomplished. She knew that the earl would visit her at the cottage of Morgan Hughes, that he still wore the ring; knew the time of his visit, therefore the schemes were projected accordingly. On reaching the most unfrequented part of the road he was to be attacked, overpowered, and, under a feint of robbing him, divested of this valuable ornament; but her orders were strictly to *rob*, and not to strike, wound, or otherwise injure him.

When the earl came, under the plea of womanish fears, Julia succeeded in depriving him of his dog; and, when he departed, gave the signal to her emissaries to follow. They obeyed her, but finding Gwynne-Arthur's strength more than they had calculated upon, and familiar to the use of the poignard, they thought little of stabbing him in order to free themselves from detection. On securing their booty they returned to their directress, and gave into her possession

the valuables which they had obtained ; these she resolved should be faithfully restored to Gwynne-Arthur, except the ring, which, alone, she resigned to their care, bidding them fly from pursuit, and preserve it until she should reclaim it.

On that night, as the Italians were leaving the cwm, they encountered Morelli entering it : he was their countryman,—a stranger,—and according to the instructions which they had received from Julia, they arrested him, displayed the ring, of which he betrayed instant recognition, and concluding, by these circumstances, that he was the person to whom De-Lairai had alluded, they hurried him with them in their flight, and having succeeded in conveying him to France, shut him up in the Chateau Noir. Thus was the hand of justice again defeated, and the earl still kept in ignorance of his wrongs.

In the mean time, according to the proposal made between them, the baronet and Valentine had met at a little distance from the village, and

repaired to the habitation of Mabel Glendower. Valentine, having deposited his harp within the porch of a neighbouring cottage, quitted his companion in order to obtain it, whilst Sir Richard proceeded, unconscious of danger, and entering the little garden, seated himself on the stump of an old oak beneath Mabel's window. This occurred some time after the attack made upon the earl, a circumstance of which he was yet ignorant; and, whilst in this situation, he was suddenly seized as the supposed murderer, and hurried, without explanation, to the castle. Amazed at this treatment, and unwilling to display his features to recognition, he concealed his countenance from observation, but insisted on knowing the cause of their conduct; the only answer which he received was a confused jabbering of Welch, and in a short time he found himself shut up in the south turret of Castle Gwynne.

Conceive the emotion of Julia on hearing that the murderer was taken: who could he be? perhaps one of those who had perpetrated the deed, or—it was not impossible—Morelli himself!

Eager to have her fears on this subject dispelled, she repaired to the castle. Gracious heaven! the being who stood there, accused of the act which *she* had effected, was he whom she doated on,—the only one on earth whom she loved,—the only one she would have died to preserve! And by *her* means was he thus disgraced,—by her means had he been brought into the situation of a criminal! She would yet preserve him—she would yet release him from this dreadful charge, whatever it might cost her: Gwynne-Arthur's life was nothing, so that the honour of the baronet could be preserved. Thus, as Mabel had remarked that night, in the hearing of the guilty Julia,

“ Evil on itself shall back recoil.”

During his residence at the castle, and the indisposition of the earl, Sir Richard and Angela often met, but not a word passed between them, and now the baronet almost doubted that she was the wife of Gwynne-Arthur: he conceived it to be merely a tale fabricated to deceive and

triumph over him ; he knew that her representation of *Julia*, in the play, would consequently bring her under the observation of the countess, therefore he waited for this event as the signal of his future proceedings. Imagine his surprise at the earl's easy credulity, and his disgust at Angelina's duplicity and shamelessness, when he beheld her really acknowledged as his wife ; it would be an injury and an insult to the countess to stay, and, by his presence, give countenance to such proceedings, therefore he departed as abruptly as we have described. The detection of Angela was a thing he had expected, and, when called upon by the earl for an explanation of such circumstances as had come within his knowledge, he withheld it not.

Whilst these events were occurring, Morelli was closely confined in the Chateau Noir, whilst the banditti made various excursions into different parts of the neighbourhood. One night, during their absence, he contrived to get possession of the ring, and escape to Paris, He im-

mediately departed for England, and shortly afterwards arrived in London.

Many reports of the late exposé in the fashionable world soon reached his ear, and determined that Julia should no longer enjoy her guilty triumph, and cover a noble family with obloquy, he presented himself at the residence of the earl, intending to communicate to him the long series of events which have been related ; but the insolence of “ pampered menials,” had several times denied him admission ; at length he thought of an expedient to attract the attention of the earl, and succeeded,—that of sending up the mysterious ring. With the rest the reader is already acquainted.

On the morning after the discovery of Julia by her husband, Morelli, with his daughter, appeared at the habitation of the earl and countess. Julia and the fictitious Manfredini had departed on the preceding night, taking with them as many valuables as she could secure, and leaving

Zizi, greatly distressed in mind by these agitating circumstances, and unconscious of their intentions, to meet, for the first time, a father.

The earl received the unfortunate Italian with great kindness, and gained from him a promise not to leave town until he should again behold him.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE SACRIFICE.

I loved the maid for loving me.

Old Song.

IT was a beautiful morning in May, when an elegant travelling carriage, decorated with white favours, passed through the turnpike at the end of Piccadilly, and took the road to Bath. This equipage contained Miss Mac-Alister, Sir Richard Gordon, and his lovely bride,—the happy Winny. Nature had put on her most charming aspect, as though giving them an earnest of the future felicity of their guiltless and honourable lives.

At the same moment Mabel Glendower was

seated in the drawing room in Wimpole-street, inditing a congratulatory epistle to the beautiful bride. She had not witnessed the nuptials, she had not wished to do so, yet she experienced a sacred pleasure in the contemplation of them, for she felt that in relinquishing the baronet she had performed—her duty;—but, in compliment to the esteemed pair, she had thrown aside her mourning garb: she was habited in a plain dress of white, and the bridal favor was fastened amid the tresses of her long dark hair.

She trembled whilst she wrote, her cheek was as pale as her vesture, but no tear nor sigh escaped her: the sorrow which preyed upon her heart had passed that stage in which the eye will weep, and the lips utter a sigh of anguish. Weeks had elapsed since the discovery and departure of the infamous Julia Morelli, and her companion Dalzell; the earl was at liberty, yet had he sought her not, nor had she seen or heard aught of the countess: both had forsaken her. “Well, thought she, “though they should not again remember the being whom they once dazzled

by their favor, I will never obtrude myself upon their notice." She had heard of the sudden change in the affairs of Lord Gwynne-Arthur, she knew it all, yet she encouraged no hope,—no expectation, scarcely a wish;—indeed, the latter was not indulged under any plea whatever.

As she folded the letter, a carriage was heard to stop at the door, and in a few moments a note was delivered to her. It came from the countess of Castle Gwynne, who begged her immediate attendance, having a particular wish to see her;—her ladyship had also sent her chariot for her, in order to prevent delay. Surprised by this haste, yet unwilling to offend, Mabel threw a shawl over her and descended to the carriage. On her way to Park-lane she was marvelling why she had been thus peremptorily summoned: for what purpose could the countess require her presence? Perhaps she should encounter the earl. She had not seen him since he had regained his liberty, and to meet him *this morning* she felt would be peculiarly

painful; at any rate, neither of them should perceive that her spirits were in the least depressed: Oh no, she would appear all vivacity: not the most penetrating eye should discover her sorrows.

It was not long ere she arrived at the countess's residence, Lady Gwynne-Arthur and the earl had just returned from witnessing the marriage of the baronet and Winny. The folding doors which communicated between the drawing-rooms were closed, and her ladyship, in a bridal dress, was seated alone in the front apartment.

On the entrance of Miss Glendower, the countess seemed surprised by the hue of her apparel; and after the first compliments had passed, she said.

"You have thrown aside your sable habiliments, is it in honour of this happy morning?"

"It is:" replied Mabel, "for I highly esteem both the baronet and his bride, and sincerely hope they may enjoy many—*very* many years of mutual felicity!"

“ Perhaps it is an unfair question to ask you at this moment, whether there was not a kind of *tendre* between you and Sir Richard Gordon ?”

Mabel blushed with astonishment, she thought the interrogation by no means a warrantable one, yet answered mildly. “ There was—is—and I hope ever will be—a very great friendship between us, but nothing more ?”

“ And is your heart at this moment perfectly free ?”

“ May I ask why your ladyship makes that enquiry ?”

“ Because, my dear Mabel, as you are an orphan, I think it highly necessary that you should speedily settle in life: Lady Williams is not young, and ere many years have elapsed she may lie in her grave ; you would then be more destitute than you are at present. I have promised to protect you, but death may also deprive you of me. A gentleman, whose proposals are such as ought not to be rejected,—whose merits in every respect must claim esteem and admiration, and whose sincerity I cannot doubt, has begged

me to intercede with you, for him, on this subject."

The countess paused, Mabel's cheek turned even paler than before, she shook her head, but spoke not, and her lip trembled. At length she said. "No. Had I been capable of loving any one, I should have loved Sir Richard Gordon, and after him, no one can expect to be loved."

"But, my dear Mabel, this is silly, your own interest demands your compliance. May I ask why you could *not* love Sir Richard?"

"In regard to himself he was such as any one might love;" exclaimed Mabel, "but there were reasons, wholly unconnected with the baronet, which prevented me feeling a passionate affection for him."

"A prior attachment, perhaps?"

Mabel burst into tears.

"I am much obliged by your ladyship's good intentions," she said, "and grateful for them, but I am resolved never to marry."

"For what reason?"

"Because I can never love."

“ Foolish girl ! When I mention the name of the gentleman, I dare say you will think him worthy your attention ? He is the Earl of—— shall I proceed ? ”

“ Oh no,” said Mabel, still weeping, “ neither wealth nor titles can allure me :—I will not marry—I cannot love—I should be miserable—criminal to do so ! ”

“ I will call him hither to speak for himself.” said the countess, advancing towards the back drawing room.

“ Oh, no ! ” exclaimed Mabel, starting from her seat and rushing across the room, “ Do not call him—I will not see him ! ”

At this instant Gwynne-Arthur sprung from the adjoining apartment, stepped forward to oppose her progress, and bowed, until he almost knelt, before her. There was a momentary gleam of indignation in the countenance of Mabel Glendower, as, gazing upon the earl and countess, alternately, she exclaimed :

“ Surely, you have not brought me here to make a mockery of me ? ”

The countess turned away and wept,—the sacrifice was accomplished:—Ambition had bowed to Honour and to Justice.

“ I will hope that the tear of a repentant sinner will not be rejected even at the shrine of Virtue,” said the earl, venturing, for the first time in many months, to take her hand; he led her back to a seat, she was petrified, and incapable of resisting.

“ Can you forgive me, Mabel ?” asked the earl, relinquishing her hand, and standing like a conscious criminal before her. “ Can you forgive my numerous offences? I blush to think how much I have wronged you! But say that you pardon me—I will never offend again, and, if a life devoted to your service can make reparation for my fault, it shall be yours!”

He waited for an answer: the sudden revolution of feeling, caused by this event, for a moment overpowered her faculties, and starting, as from a long and painful dream, she said, looking incredulously upon the earl and his mother, “ Oh! but it is not true?”

Gwynne-Arthur seated himself beside her, and brushed from his eye a tear, which had for the last few moments stood in it.

“It is true!” exclaimed the countess, approaching her, “Oh Mabel Glendower, can you not forgive a repentant lover? can you not accept Gwynne-Arthur as your wedded husband, even when his mother approves and blesses the union?”

Mabel gazed for an instant upon the countess, then clasped her hands, burst into tears, and said, “Oh! that my father could know this!”

“He *does* know it!” exclaimed the countess, wound up to enthusiasm by her excited feelings, and the triumph which she had just obtained over her ruling passion, “He *does* know it! The angel who records the expiation of human offences, has already borne this deed to heaven, and to thy sainted parent! Mabel, say that thou wilt become the wife of my son!”

“I will not deny that I love you, Lord Gwynne-Arthur,” said Mabel, “it would be

affectation to do so ; there are none in authority over me to prevent this act, and, if there were, none could disapprove **my** choice : therefore, *I do say it !*”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CONCLUSION.

A YEAR, spent by the earl, and countess, Lady Williams, and Miss Glendower, at Florence, passed over the heads of this happy party, ere Mabel gave her hand to Gwynne-Arthur; and then with a heart full of affection for the object of her choice—of gratitude to heaven, and her highly esteemed friends, she united herself with her still-idolised and contrite lover. I doubt not that many of those who do me the favour to peruse my pages, are ready to protest against the felicity of Gwynne-Arthur, and to declare that he really does not deserve to be thus rewarded for his faithfulness, and

infidelity; Mabel, perhaps, was weak in so easily pardoning the offender, but was she not also *natural* in doing so? I do not know one generous female heart (such a heart as I could approve) that would not have yielded as Mabel's did towards Lord Gwynne-Arthur. If firmness is the dignifier of man, affection also is the ornament of woman, and, fascinating and amiable as she is generally depicted, what were woman with all her blandishments, if,

———“wanting one sweet weakness—to forgive?”

I should say,

———“hardly virtue's friend,
For virtue *pardons* those she would *amend*.”

I have little more to add: the countess had lived to behold the vanity of Ambition, and the superiority of humble virtue to splendid vice—to perform an act of justice to the memory of Owen Glendower, by uniting her child with his—and, finally, to feel what she had long been seeking: *happiness*.

A few days prior to their departure for Italy, Morelli and his daughter waited upon the earl; the finances of the Italian were much reduced, and Gwynne-Arthur not only liberally supplied his present deficiencies, but settled on him an annuity sufficient to preserve him and his child from indigence; and, in a short time, Morelli and Zizi departed for their native country.

With the knowledge and perfect concurrence of Mabel, Lord Gwynne-Arthur now hastened to perform what he considered an imperative act of duty; namely, to settle also, on the unhappy and guilty Julia, an independence adequate to preserve her from want—but too narrow to allow extravagance or luxury—to be possessed by her when she should abandon her present wretched course of life, and return to the direction of the few sentiments of morality left her,—if any, indeed, remained; but the stained being for whom he thus tenderly provided, never deigned to claim his liberality: she, and her companion Dalzell, resided for some years about the court

of Spain ; and, at length, died miserably amid their equally criminal associates.

A little while after the marriage of the earl and Mabel, Lucy Jones gave her hand to Mr. Jenkins, and the noble family honoured the nuptials with their presence ; Anne also found a partner, and was, eventually, contented with being something below a *countess*. Morgan Hughes, since his London trip, has become the oracle of the village, he grows grey in wisdom, and, though *unacknowledged* and *unknown* as such, by himself, still continues the sincere *friend* of the “*yard*.”

Perhaps some one will like to know how, after this sudden elevation, Mabel encountered Lady Emma and the host of Langleys : did she triumph over them ? No : the triumph of the young countess was so palpable, as to render perfectly unnecessary any effort of her own to display it : her conduct was unchanged : she met them as she would meet those to whom good-breeding obliged her to be polite, not any friendly feeling.

Let me see—I think I have now disposed of every character in the book—no, Percival still remains unmentioned;—what have I to say of him? Why, that, on the marriage of Winny with the baronet, he was so much shocked and agitated by the event, as to remain, for some time, “bent, but not broken,” beneath this severe stroke of fate; but when his spirits allowed him to recover from the blow, he looked around again, and happily healed the transient wound by the acceptance of Helen Mac-Alistair’s fair hand, bestowed on him by her gallant brother.

It was on a beautiful evening in autumn, that the earl, the two countesses, and Lady Williams, in his lordship’s travelling carriage, first approached the castle of Gwynne-Arthur, after the happy union. Their arrival had been expected, and prepared for; bonfires were piled on the heath, and the blaze began as the carriage drew in sight; whilst the village bells struck out a merry peal, and the lawn exhibited a crowd of happy smiling

faces, consisting of domestics, peasantry, and tenants.

The earl ordered the postillions to stop at the gate of the lawn, as he wished to gratify the faithful and affectionate people so far as to walk by them to the door of the castle. Outside the gate, and nearer than all the rest, stood the aged minstrel, with a countenance of elevated and supreme delight ; soon as the earl stepped out of the carriage, he ran forward, caught his hand, kissed it, then kissed both of Mabel's, who followed next, and bathed them with tears of overwhelming bliss ; his favourite attendant, signor Tasso, had perched himself on the gate, and sported a new blue silk collar on the occasion. Mabel found the old man's affectionate deportment almost overpower her, and to prevent a tear being seen in her eye on this happy evening, she turned to stroke Tasso, and shook his white paw, by way of salutation ; in compliment to the minstrel's feelings, Gwynne-Arthur did the same ; and the grateful Valentine, taking the beautiful animal in his arms, silently followed

the earl and his bride, as they walked arm-in-arm amongst their tenants and dependants, speaking to one, nodding to another, smiling at a third, and reaching the hand to a fourth. The countess and Lady Williams followed at some distance; and though to the latter the scene was not a common one, it yet afforded happiness from the delight which every other person seemed to experience in it.

As the young countess turned to make a general reverence to the crowd, ere she entered the castle, she beheld a group of light figures standing upon the lawn, far away from the rest, and, apparently, on the point of retiring; they were the Joneses, whose friendship and regard had not allowed them to omit that tribute of respect which their presence would convey to the noble owners of the soil, but whose modesty did not permit them to intrude themselves on the notice of one who was now so much above them. Immediately on recognising her old friends, Mabel darted across the lawn, and with a burst of joyful tears, which she could no longer restrain, gave

the hand and the cheek to each; she then took Lucy's arm, and giving her other hand to Anne, begged Mr. and Mrs. Jones to walk beside them—thus she again advanced to the castle, and led the party into the saloon, despite the numerous apologies they made on the score of dress. &c.

Mabel was just about to retire, in order to divest herself of her travelling habiliments, when another carriage, covered with trunks and dust, advanced up the lawn, amongst the scattering crowd, and stopped at the entrance of the castle. Sir Richard and Lady Gordon alighted from it, and Mabel ran out to welcome them with feelings of astonishment and delight.

“My dear friends!” she exclaimed, when the salutations were over, “how can I express the sincere pleasure which your unexpected appearance gives me!”

“Unexpected?” said the baronet, with his amiable and good-humoured smile. “Unexpected, after your pressing invitation?”

“What invitation, my dear friend?” asked Mabel, with amusing simplicity.

Gwynne-Arthur, laughing, exclaimed, " I believe it is now *my* turn to interfere : knowing dearest Mabel, that you would be quite as much delighted to witness my friends' happiness as they would be to behold ours, I secretly wrote to invite the baronet and Lady Gordon to join us here, to day; uniting your intreaties with my own, by way of a frolic, as I intended you this pleasant surprise : and now the murder is out ! But dinner waits ; we have lost so much time already, that there is none left for changing dresses, so we must even sit down as we are. Lady Gordon, permit me to lead you to the banqueting hall ; Sir Richard and Doctor Jones, do me the favor to follow my example, and conduct the ladies. Our harper shall sit in his old place, and we will have some genuine Cambrian melody during our repast. Gordon, had you brought down some of your Highland clansmen, we might have had Scotch music to aid the Welsh minstrelsy ; for after all that can be said of *Twdwrs*, *Meredydds*, and *Shenkius*, what, at such a feast as this, would be more in

unison with our scene and sentiments, thar
your own old national air,

“ Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind ?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And the days o' lang syne ? ”

FINIS.

POPLETT, Printer, 10, Jewin-street, Cripplegate.

NOTES

TO THE THIRD VOLUME.

P. 71. ^a—*Pulgan*, is the religious service performed in churches, at four o'clock, on Christmas morning ; when the church is illuminated, and the congregation which repair to it are escorted thither by their flambeaux and torch bearers, producing rather a splendid effect in that deep obscurity which precedes day-break.

P. 134. l. 13. ^b—*Beirdd*, is the ancient British name for bards, of which there were, formerly, three sorts, in Wales.

P. 237. l. 1. ^c—At the solicitation of a friend, this song was permitted to appear, originally, in “ Rosalviva, or the Demon Dwarf, a Romance, by Grenville Fletcher, Esq.”

P. 248. l. 3. ^d—The elegant poem from which this short extract is made, was published in 1822, under the title of “ The Spirit of the Lakes, or Mucruss Abbey, by Miss Luby.”

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